

The Death of Berk

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Summary: From the flames of a dying village, one simple young woman runs for her life. Her family, her home, her everything was destroyed by enemy forces. Ruffnut will need everything she's got, all her strength and courage, along with the help of a few unexpected friends, if she's to save her home from the flames.

1. Chapter 1

It took me so long to get around to writing this. Hey, the last one was really long, so give me a break! Also, I've been away for a week without internet as well, so yeah. Anyway, this is my new story, might possibly be the last you hear from me on the HTTYD side of things, so make the most of it! However, if I can be persuaded, I have an idea for a sequel to The Runaway...

_Okay, here goes: _

This was fire like nothing else. The kind of fire that you could feel meters away, scorching your clothes and singeing your hair. Fire so bright it dazzled your eyes. Smoke so black it blotted out the sun and the sky above, choking everything around it. Ash floating like tiny insects on the hot wind, embers nipping your bare skin if you were stupid enough to get too close. Funnels of thick fumes reached miles into the sky; great, swaying black beacons.

The trees around the devastation curled into black husks, twisted charcoal fingers grasping at their life force as the flames drew it away. Somewhere in that mass of chaos, there used to stand a town. In fact, if you were to peer close enough, you would find the broken shadows of buildings still burning. The lower levels of the village still stood, the barns, harbour, water tower and nesting places still tucked away in a bubble of safety. Ships cowered between the long platforms of the docks, some cut loose and floating away, others used as escape vessels for the villagers fleeing their destroyed home.

Pounding footsteps disturbed the dust-covered grass that grew between the tall, thick pines. Spiky boughs shuffled and swayed as a blackened figure pushed them aside in her hurry to be away. She picked her way across the uneven ground, quick yet careful, jumping from rock to rock, grass to dirt, fleeing her village. Before her, she spotted an outcrop jutting out towards the sea, so close yet so far, twisting up into the sky, almost as tall as the trees themselves. With light precision, she scrambled up to the top, finally taking a moment to look back at the place she had fled.

Ruffnut doubled over, coughing wetly, spitting phlegm into the ashy bushes below. Her breathing was ragged and laboured, her lungs full of black. They had chased her clean through the village, between the rows of burning properties, relentless and cruel. The flames had blocked her view; she had been lost within her own home, such an unfamiliar feeling. Dashing from street to street, in a frenzy of fear and alarm...

Shaking her head, she tried to cleanse her thoughts of it, but every time she looked up at the smouldering wreck of Berk, it all came flooding back. Another bout of coughing consumed her, the taste of soot in her throat sharp and sickening. Everything she knew was gone. Everything; her friends; her family; her dragon: gone. She closed her eyes to the swelling feeling of tears, the heat rising in her cheeks. It felt like the end of everything, and yet, she still had to go on.

She could hear shouts, not far away. Soldiers. They were back. In one swift movement, as the thumping of their thick leather boots drew closer, she slid down from the rock and back onto the ground. Something made her run, forced her to keep going, but she couldn't tell exactly what it was. The will to survive? The hope that things would change? Anything she thought of seemed hopeless, and yet, there she was, still ducking between the trunks and dashing down the hills. Perhaps it was simply fear, raw and potent, keeping her strong despite her burning lungs.

They weren't far behind now, but she was used to the rough, hard ground, and she had nothing on her person to weigh her down. Her eyes stung, breath coming in short, sharp gasps, limbs burning and yet numb at the same time. Overwhelmed, she stumbled, and it only took a second before whatever force was pushing her on to dispel and send her crashing, hopeless, to the ground, where she lay and heaved for air, shaking from head to toe. The soldiers didn't need to search far to find her, curled up in a ball, trying to recover what little strength she had left.

"On your feet!" One snarled savagely, giving her ribs a mighty kick. She didn't even make a noise. If it wasn't for her trembling, they could easily have taken her for dead. She heard swords being pulled from sheaths as she struggled to move, to kneel, to stand. The face of hatred stared back at her with no mercy in his eyes. Swords were aimed straight for her throat.

Suddenly, it clicked again. That feeling, that pull. _Get out. You have to get out._ A panic rose within her that she couldn't quite quell, and it must have shown, for the soldier before her sneered unkindly. She heard the cocking of a cross-bow behind her.

_Cross-bow. _Instantly, she knew what she had to do. Spinning around, she stared the archer straight in the eyes, a slight smirk threatening to crawl onto her face, and then stuck out her tongue in the most childish of ways, taunting. He answered with a snarl and a shot, the latter of which she ducked below, turning back just in time to watch the bolt enter the first man's sword hand through the knuckle and keep on straight up his arm.

He let out a cry of alarm and pain, dropping his sword as blood burst forth. Stamping on the tip of the blade, Ruffnut flipped the sabre into her grasp and swung around, cutting the cross-bow string. As the rest of the bunch of armoured men looked about themselves in shock, the twin made good her escape, dashing through the hole she had made in their defences and crashing off through the undergrowth, tossing the sword over her shoulder.

"What are you waiting for? After her!" The commander screamed, clutching his injury to his chest with shaking, bloody fists. As his men left him behind, he continued to groan and to attempt to stop the bleeding.

Meanwhile, Ruffnut was running as fast as she had ever run. She knew she couldn't keep it up, but she was hoping that, very soon, she would have the chance to hide somewhere before they closed the gap. However, the trees began to blur together and the ground swayed beneath her, faces leaping out of the shadows, sounds becoming confused. She stumbled. None of the breaths she was taking seemed to be taking in oxygen. Her chest tightened. Her head span. It was almost lucky that, at that moment, her arms were snatched by soldiers. Ruffnut's legs gave out as her whole world went black.

A moment later, she awoke on the floor, her head throbbing and her chest and limbs burning. She struggled to take deep breaths as she slowly, painfully looked up to find a pair of boots staring her straight in the face. Further up, atop heavily armoured, thick legs sat a broad torso, metal breastplate shining. She struggled to her knees, moving slowly to ease her aching limbs, finally meeting the face of a terrifying, battle-scarred, unforgiving man. Everything about him shouted 'leader', from the unforgiving look in his eye to the straightness of his posture, the authority in his voice to the way he held his shoulders. Ruffnut gulped: this man meant business.

"Bind her." He commanded simply, not moving an inch as the woman was hefted up to her feet and thrown back against a tree. Her wrists were roughly snatched and pulled back behind her, tied together so that she could barely move. She looked up helplessly into the eyes of her captors.

"The boss is gonna be very happy with us. You're the last free dragon rider, and we're the ones who're going to bring you down. Oh yes, Dagur will be very happy indeed..." The man chuckled to himself, causing the rest of his band to snort and chortle along.

Ruffnut raised her head, resisting the urge to choke. "Dagur? You're Berserkers?"

"Oh yes," He growled smoothly, "We're the Berserker tribe. The new owners of this wet heap of rock."

"Not yet, you're not!" She snarled meanly, baring her teeth in defiance. The leader simply smirked smugly.

"And what are you planning to do about it?" When no answer came, he laughed heartily and strode slowly away, metal armour gleaming. Ruffnut hung her head. What was she going to do about it? As she was thinking, she caught sight of a sudden flash of colour in the corner of her eye. Looking around slowly, she found herself face-to-face with a beautifully colourful, flame orange butterfly. It flitted and fluttered until it came to a rest gracefully on her shoulder. Ruffnut found herself smiling. Something about the arrival of the strange little creature made her feel just a little bit calmer, a little bit safer.

There was a loud snort, followed by a large hand shooting out and snatching the butterfly by one wing. The enormous man was back, a cruel sneer on his face.

"You know, in our culture, these can be very good luck." There was something about the nasty glint in his eye, the way he rubbed his fingers roughly along the creature's wing and played with the dust that told her it wasn't the little insect itself that they considered 'good luck'. "Look at it. Such a big, pretty one, eh? Shame the only way to get lucky is to do this..."

Ruff grimaced as he took the sparkling wing in his fingers and pulled, slowly and carefully, until with a sickening sound it came away from the body. She watched in horror as the helpless creature writhed in agony, its legs flailing, its long mouth-part curling and uncurling as its second wing was brutally ripped off. The man let the tiny, dusty appendages fall like twinkling leaves to the ground, then dropped the shiny black body along with them. Ruffnut continued to stare in horror. Something in her mind likened her to that tiny little thing, still squirming in the ash, barely visible now, like that was the precursor to her own doom.

"A-aren't you going to kill it?" She stuttered, feeling ever-so-slightly sick.

"Of course not! Everything a Berserker kills must die in agony. It must wish for death, beg for death, before we finally let it come to them." He spoke slowly, cruelly as he moved the toes of his boot ever-so-slightly, slowly pushing down until the crunch of a tiny body could be heard. He ground its remains into the dirt, that mean snarl still plastered on his face.

"That is our way. And now, it is your turn. We've not come to capture you, oh no. We've come to put you to death."

Cue the cat from Puss in Boots: _

Ooooooh! _

Yeah, anyway. Will Ruffnut get away? Or will she get help from a very unexpected source? Find out in the next chapter! It's so good to be back... _

A little side-note to one of my readers who asked, and generally to anyone else who is interested, The Runaway 2: Under Siege is not about Bryn's village being attacked, as you will hopefully soon see.

It is set 4 years after the first one and... well, anything else I say will give away the plot! I may post a few little tasters here and there, probably on the end of The Runaway, so keep that story on your watch list for previews and more!_

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of the new story! And what will happen here, you ask? Well, wait and find out! I was writing out a plan for this one and it was supposed to be a bullet-point plan. Around 16 paragraphs and several hours later, I'm beginning to regret the decision. Oh well, I suppose it still helps!

_Guest: Well, most of that is to be found out. However, this _not_ being The Runaway 2, Kat/Bryn will not be making an appearance. You'll have to wait for the next one to see her again!_

Hiccupisnotuseless: Once again I am honoured to hear from you. I'm glad you're exited, I think you'll be really please by these 'unexpected friends' because at one time I promised you I'd write about them but I never did. Well, now I have! Also, this isn't necessarily the last you'll hear from me. Until I find another show I'm obsessed with, I guess I'll just have to keep writing here!

_ : Well well, a Mexican reader! I'm really flattered my stories have reached so far. I'd love to come out writing fluent Spanish/Mexican, but unfortunately, I only speak French as a foreign language. Oh well. Thank You!_

Guest: I don't know, really. Any suggestions of shows for me to watch are very welcome! Also, you're welcome for the info and thank you for reviewing!

The commander advanced, sword flashing as he pulled it from its casings and lifted it above his head. His muscles rippled through his bare arms, yellowed teeth bared as he advanced on the helpless individual before him. The rest of his band looked on mockingly, sneering and jeering. Ruffnut shrank away, nervous of the man threatening her life. However, in a way, it was almost a relief. Berk had died, her friends had died, now it was her turn. It seemed almost right.

A leather-clad hand clenched into a fist. Ruffnut looked up into the sky, where the smoke still blotted out the weak sun, where the ash from the fires could still be seen fluttering and floating about in the air. Her gaze fell. He stood before her, seeming as tall as the pines around him, white with ash and scorched, just like everything else.

"Get away from me," She warned, her voice low, gravelly, but it only made him laugh. Her situation was completely out of context, the dullness in her eyes telling a different story, opposing her show of defiance. Snorting, he thrust his fist into her stomach, smirking as she yelped, doubling over and retching. She coughed wetly, hoping this could be over soon. She tried to look him in the eye, but the colours dancing before her made it hard to see straight. Her body was trembling all over.

A sudden screech broke through the ungodly silence. The sneering faces of the group of soldiers were suddenly turned away, searching for the source. They could hear something coming towards them, smashing and roaring its way through the forest. They had no time to react as an enormous pine was brought crashing down atop one of the men, crushing him beneath it. The magnificent silhouette of a dragon reared up from behind it, slamming its tiny fore-legs down upon the aged wood. They could hear the crunch of the soldiers bones, watched the blood wind its way out between the blades of ashy grass.

The Scauldron stood a head and shoulders taller than any other dragon they'd seen, great wings like ladies fans spreading their way out from its glossy shoulders, wider in length than three men were tall. Its colossal mouth opened and closed with snapping motions as it scented the air and peered down with wide, bright eyes. They lingered a moment on the prisoner, hanging her head and wishing it all away, before it gave a most indignant roar and bringing back its head, preparing to fire.

The heat from the shot was staggering, despite the fact that it was water and not fire that this dragon breathed. A long and accurate beam of boiling, scorching water surged forth, engulfing the men who were scurrying to escape. Ruffnut watched as all but the commander, running the opposite way, perished under the Scauldron's unforgiving attack.

"Wow, they were right," She mused, looking over the dead bodies as though they were artefacts in a museum, "Scauldron's water really _does_ melt the skin off your bones."

Suddenly, its gaze was upon her. She lowered her head, preparing for an attack at any second, waiting, just waiting, for death to come. She felt it sniff her over, taking deep drags of her scent, its long nose-horn nudging playfully at her. All of a sudden, she felt the most gentle of tugs on one of her braids. Opening her eyes, she found that the dragon had it in its mouth and was holding it there as though it were an object of comfort. Her brow creased. The dehydration, the pain, the sickness, the inhumanity of everything was clouding her thoughts, but slowly, slowly, she began to piece together a crumbling memory in the back of her mind.

"...Scauldy...?" She whispered, almost not believing the word as it came out of her mouth. The dragon crooned softly at the sound of its name, dropping the braid and blinking tamely as she met his gaze. Her friend dropped onto his great, swollen belly, huffing softly, blowing hot breath in her face. "Scauldy! It's you!" She whooped in delight. Maybe all was not lost. Her face broke into a wide grin, all of her boundless energy seemingly restored. "What are you doing here?"

As if in reply, the Scauldron snorted softly, his mouth slightly open as though he, too, was smiling. He pressed his nose into her stomach, not realising until she groaned that it was a tender area. Ruffnut pushed him away with her knee, smiling at his apologetic look. Then, his head was up in the air, looking about, tense, like a coiled spring. He shot up onto his little legs, sniffing deeply. Ruffnut could see the deep swell of his chest as the noise of soldiers coming towards them became apparent.

"Scauldy! Free me and lets get out of here!" She called up.

Obligingly, the dragon followed her commands, chewing through the thick ropes to release her and letting her climb up onto his soggy back. The young woman remembered, suddenly, that Scauldrons had to keep their scales damp or their skin would dry out. It was another thing the chief had taught her, another thing to be grateful for. Pushing away any thought of home, she positioned herself at the base of his neck and held tightly to his slick scales as his wings snapped open around him.

Riding Scauldy was not at all like riding her own Zippleback. It took only a single beat of Barf and Belch's wings and she, her brother and the dragon were airborne and soaring off into the sky. For the Scauldron, it took several beats before he could even lift his wide belly into the air. It was full of super-heated water and heavy to lift, but once up, he flew gracefully, up and up and out of reach of those below him. With a snort, Scauldy turned to take his new rider away from the horror of her destroyed home.

"It's gone..." The twin gazed back at the flames, feeling drained of every emotion save for the overwhelming sadness. "Oh, I feel so sick... I just can't believe it; everyone is gone. Will I ever see them again? My brother? My dragon? My friends?" Thinking aloud didn't make it any easier on her. She closed her eyes, tears forcing their way out and down her cheeks. Ruffnut wasn't one to cry; in fact, she despised the emotion; but nothing could hold back the flow of pain and anger that cut deep scars through the white dusting on her cheeks. Falling forward onto Scauldy's neck, she took deep, shaking breaths, trying to calm herself, but she only succeeded in finding a raw pain in her lungs that made her choke and cough herself further into misery.

Scauldy turned back towards Berk, looking over the burning husks of buildings in the centre, still belching out acrid smoke that stung one's eyes and burned one's throat. "Turn around, Scauldy," Ruffnut begged, "I'll be sick if I have to look at it anymore."

However, the dragon refused, looking back at his rider with a soft, achingly adoring gaze, his eyes shining in the flickering firelight. "I said turn back, are you deaf?" His rider growled, hugging her aching stomach miserably, her characteristic scowl plastered on her face. With a huff, Scauldy turned back and dived down, heading straight towards the village. Despite her shouts of protest, he ignored his rider, getting ever closer to the remains of Berk until they were flying right above it.

Only then did his intentions become clear. His head jerked back, before his neck straightened and he released a steady spray of water, dousing the flames in his path like a huge, living fire-hose. To the amazement of Ruffnut, he glided through the columns of fumes and put out every single fire, from enormous forests of flame to tiny, flitting embers. Though the blackened streets still remained as a testament, the fires themselves were gone in an instant. Scauldy turned calmly back, gliding out across the sea and dunking his head below the water so that he could flick it over his dry, cracked belly scales. Ruffnut stretched herself out as much as her bruised midriff would allow, pressing her cheek against the strangely warm but wet skin of the dragon. Somehow, she just found the gesture comforting, like a hug from a dear friend or a brother. There was a strange calm now washing over the twin like a warm wave as she realised what the Scauldron had done for her.

"You did all that for me..." She croaked, closing her streaming eyes and holding her dragon tightly. "Thank you..."

With that, the two disappeared behind the last rays of the setting sun, glinting up from the rippling water below.

How did I do that all in one sitting? And at 00:30 hrs? You know you've done too much when you can see a rippling of colours at the edges of your eyes. I think I'm going to sleep now...

After proof-reading this, I can now say that I don't write utter nonsense when I'm that tired, despite what I was expecting. Just a few bits here and there. Anyway, with it all corrected, it is now ready for all of you!

3. Chapter 3

_Back again! I'm writing these out super-fast and stocking them up for later, which means, if I was to finish them, I could have two stories uploading at once. I'll upload every day if I can, but if you're ever unsure, go check my profile, I have all the upload days there to keep you up to date. _

Hiccupisnotuseless: I knew you'd enjoy that! I hope you've noticed that I reviewed one of your chapters too. Indeed, Dagur is a monster, but there's nothing we can do about that!

Punpkin Kuro: Yes, he is. I had to bring him back, seriously, I love him so much. His great big eyes melt my heart. I'm sure there will be some bada**ery later on. In fact, I know the whole story, so it's pretty much confirmed.

Guest: Thank you very much! I did have an idea for RotG, but I don't know whether I can get into it enough to write it. I'll just have to watch the movie again and see. Would you like to see that?

Tuffnut slouched against the wooden wall, a tired look on his face. The hard-packed dirt of the floor was leaving stains on his trousers and dust on his shoes. The heat of the fires had stopped around an hour ago, leaving the wall cool enough to lean on. However, it could have been longer, or shorter, he really couldn't be sure. He looked up at the sloped ceiling, curving to a point at the top of the roof, observing the patches of moss. Then, his eyelids drooped closed, head falling to one side. He let out an overly-loud snore, his nose twitching.

The guard peering through the gate chuckled, satisfied that this prisoner was going no-where. She let go of the thick, iron bars that stood between her and the young man on the floor, pacing slowly away, crossbow in hand. Tuffnut's eyes were suddenly open again, bright and alert. His head shot up, muscles tensed. Never in his life had he been so focused. Shaking his wrists from the ropes, he peered about for an escape route, rubbing the marks left by his bindings as he went.

"I've never been so glad to have sharp stones in the floor..." he muttered to himself, discarding the one he had dug out of the floor with his nails and crawling on hands and knees around, looking for

any weakness, any flaw in the thick wooden walls. Suddenly, his eyes alighted on a patch that was green with rot and black with fire damage. If he could just put enough pressure on it, it would crack and he might just be able to squeeze through. Bracing his back against the wall, he placed his feet against the wood, pushing hard against the blockade, desperate for his plan to work.

The wood gave way with a deafening crack that echoed down the hallway. The guard was almost instantly back at her post, peering through the bars to see the young man exactly where she'd left him, hands behind his back, slamming the back of his helmet into the wall, giving off a loud sound quite alike the one she had heard before. Passing it off as just the crazy, bored antics of an insane prisoner, the guard snorted and padded quietly away again.

Once again, the twin came to life, waiting for a second as he listened to her footsteps disappearing down the hallway. Then, as if charged with electricity, he leapt forward and pushed the cracked boards outwards. They bent, splintering and snapping, until they finally gave way, leaving a gap just big enough for him to drag himself through. Ignoring the shout of surprise from the guard, who had just caught him, he slammed himself down on his stomach and forced his body through. This was the only way he could escape, the only way to save himself and his village. He knew that just waiting out there would be his friends, his sister, his dragon, and together, they would make things right.

His legs finally freed, Tuffnut leapt to his feet, his arms above his head, giving a whoop of joy at his success. His elation was quickly quelled as he heard a shout behind him, turning to find soldiers pounding down the burnt-out street after him, his guard screaming at their head. Arms still above his head, he gave a girlish scream as he dashed away from them. Around the corner, he found another band closing in, but turned down a little-known side street to escape them.

The ash-covered buildings turned to smouldering husks as he crossed the town. This was where the fires really burned. He squelched through a slush of mud and black ash, sticky like tar, almost up to his ankles. Looking over his shoulder, he found soldiers on all sides, more pouring down the street in the opposite direction. Tuffnut stopped in the centre of what was the main square and was rapidly surrounded. This was it. The escape attempt was for nothing. He gazed around at the sea of snarling, jeering face around him. They almost looked like they were spinning, making him dizzy. He shook his head, eyes closed, looking up at the circle again, but this time, his eyes caught on one particular man.

He was leaning heavily against a wall, choking and coughing and wheezing, looking as pale as the dust that had settled on his shoulders. He was trying to protect a narrow passage, but was the only one there. To the twin, he had suddenly become the only person standing (or rather, leaning) between himself and freedom. A determined look washed over his face, his muscles coiling like springs as the circle began to close the gap around him. He leant back, took a breath, and bounced forward, smashing between soldiers attempting to grab him, barging past the ailing guard and sprinting away towards the forest.

Ruffnut was woken by a jolt, then a soft, hissing growl. She opened

her eyes slowly, rubbing the sleep out of them with a dirty, bleary fist. She painfully uncoiled herself, straightening her aching legs and unwrapping her arms from around her tender stomach. Looking up, she found Scauldy's adoring eyes gazing down at her, worried. She scowled, pretending she didn't appreciate the gesture. The dragon nudged her as she slowly sat up and looked around. Obviously, she had fallen asleep while they were flying the night before and Scauldy had found a peaceful clearing far, far away from the wreckage of the village to land in. The grass swayed invitingly as she slid down off Scauldy's back and paced carefully over to the stream. Her legs and arms were refusing to cooperate. They were so stiff and painful from the day before. Stretching her arms out, trying to ease the tension, she knelt down by the calm, blue stream that ran the length of the clearing.

She looked at herself in the mirror-like water, her arms behind her back, pulling her shoulders back into shape. It was immediately apparent that she needed to wash, and with Scauldy leaving, heading down to the sea, she had the opportunity.

They were almost upon him again, chasing him down so that he had nowhere to hide. The forest wasn't very far away, but it was too far, with soldiers attacking from both sides. Once again, Tuffnut found himself trapped in a circle of men, who quickly dived forward to grab him. He'd never truly know just how he dodged the flailing limbs, grabs and snatches, the kicking legs and weapons flashing. He dived beneath the legs of a large man, who grabbed his partner by mistake.

Tuff took a second to chuckle at the tangled heap of guards all attacking one another in the middle of the cross-roads of paths. Then, feeling very pleased with himself, he slipped quietly but quickly away. It didn't take the Berserkers long to realise their mistake, but they had already lost their lead on the man and had to quickly make it up. They pounded off in relentless pursuit of Tuffnut.

Thoroughly scrubbed, Ruffnut reclined on the soft grass, soaking in the warmth of the sun. Her outer layers lay on a large rock, drying out in the rays of the sun. Her under shirt and leather trousers had already dried well enough for her to wear them, but the thick leathery jacket and woolly boots took longer to dry out. Yawning, Ruffnut again stretched out her still painful muscles, peering into the sky in time to watch her friend flutter back down into the clearing, dripping wet and carrying a couple of fish which he'd boiled up inside the deep well of his chin for her.

She'd gathered everything up and eaten quickly, knowing that they couldn't stay still for long. Back up in the air, she glanced around at the island, wincing as she caught sight of the husk of Berk, some parts still left smoking. However, as she peered closer, she found something odd. The soldiers were all dashing around like little ants, just as though they were chasing something. The figure was barely a streak: she couldn't see them from this distance, but nevertheless, they had to be Berkian. She urged Scauldy on for a closer look.

Feeling that he'd gained himself a well-earned rest, the twin slumped against a tree trunk to catch his breath. Now well into the forest, he was highly doubtful that they would be able to find him out here.

He coughed slightly, the ash from the fires still heavy in his airways, spitting out the black sludge that stung his tongue. Tuffnut let out a sigh of relief, closing his eyes to rest them for a while. Evidently, he had been too stressed to sleep the night before.

He was rudely awakened by a loud crack right beside his ear. Turning rapidly, he found a cross-bow bolt sticking out of the tree beside him, so close to his shoulder that his yak-skin jacket was pinned to the bark. He span about the other way, snatching sight of the soldiers coming for him again.

I'm gonna end this here so you don't have to wait any longer. Anyway, it ends on a cliff-hanger, so that's alright. Hope you guys are enjoying this, it's quite fun to write but because there's so much running in this chapter without a lot happening, I got a little bored. Oh well, here it is. Enjoy!

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4! Sorry the last one was a little slow, I'll try to keep to my schedule of one a day from now on. What are Ruffnut and Tuffnut going to do against a Berserker hoard? Well, you'll have to wait a bit to find out!

IMPORTANT: For explanations of where I have been and why I have been AWOL, please go and read the note on my profile.

Hiccupisnotuseless: Thanks again! In answer to your questions, does the start of this chapter not answer your first? As for the second, I didn't read the Tuffnut chapter, but I've read the others and they're very good!

Auralee Grayson: Sorry about the slow updates. I have given myself a good talking to and will strive to do better!

Guest: I've told you many times (though you may have missed it) that I post my next update times on my profile. Go have a look!

Pumpkin Kuro: Yes! He is! Lucky him. And yes, they are awesome, so there will be awesomeness to come in the next chapters

The door slammed back on its hinges, shedding light on the interior of the otherwise pitch black hall. It was vast, a cavernous expanse cut straight into the rock of the mountain, its ceiling still covered in pick marks and its walls intricately carved with images of Vikings and dragons. Along the back wall, just behind a huge wooden throne, there was a mural much newer than all the others. It was a man with a huge, bushy beard, kindly eyes hidden within the brave snarl on his face as he swung his mighty sword one last time, not at a dragon, as in most of the carvings, but at a hulking figure of a man with one arm. Behind them, dragon armies raged and fought, with two enormous dragons, Bewilderbeasts, locked in a mortal combat at their head. The carving was magnificent, but half was hidden by the bulky wooden chair before it.

If Dagur could have his way, tapestries of his glorious conquest of Berk would be hung over the face of that ugly carving. As it was, the maids of his village were still working on it back in his homeland.

For the moment, he just had his back to Stoick the Vast, the only man he could never defeat. How glad he was the once great chief was now dead. His cruel eyes met the sight of one of his soldiers with obvious hatred as he left the door swinging behind him. When a young man came blustering in at top speed as this one had, he knew those idiots had done something wrong again.

"Your Derangedness, sir..." The man fell to his knees before his leader, huffing deeply, putting his forehead to the floor in deep respect.

"Yes, what is it?" Dagur shouted, his chin on his hand, bored.

"A prisoner, sir... he... well, he escaped, sir..." He stuttered, not daring to look at the thunder crawling into Dagur's expression.

"What?! How?" He snarled, leaping to his feet, his voice cracking in fury.

"Sir, he can be captured quite easily if you would be gracious enough to let us have use of the Skrill..."

"No! My Skrill is resting, and you will not disturb him!" Dagur snarled, staring his soldier down until the man was practically cowering before him.

"Then... sir... what should we do?"

"Take all the forces, the cavalry, everything. I don't care what you use, just don't touch my Skrill." With a broad wave of his hand, he span about and sat down once again on his throne, silent and dangerous, smouldering with anger as the other man skittered away, out into the weak sunlight.

Tuffnut tugged at the arrow, in a frenzy of panic and fear. Blood pumped through his veins as he watched the soldiers thundering closer and closer. He could feel the rumble of their boots growing beneath him. With no other choice, he abandoned his yak-leather jacket, slipping it hurriedly over his shoulders, and dashed away with much haste.

Through the forest, he galloped, trying to stay one step ahead of those following him. He was quick and light on his feet, though was prone to stumbling over the slightest things. He looked over his shoulder, catching a glimpse of glimmering metal armour. Shouts and cries echoed through the twisted, scorched trees, the smell of ash kicked up by their heavy boots laced the air.

As he turned back, he realised, too late, that the land here suddenly dipped down. He tripped and fell, crashing down the muddy slope, rocks digging into his ribs, his body crashing into trees and boulders as he tumbled in circles down the drop. As he finally came to a rest at the bottom, he took a shaky breath, waiting for the sharp pain to die down so that he could move again. However, he thought to himself, at least this might get the soldiers off his tail. He didn't stop, though. He struggled to his feet, heaving for breath still, and cast a weary look behind him.

As he watched the Berserkers clamouring at the top, unsure as to how

to continue, he snorted and chuckled. Though he knew they wouldn't go any further, he still felt the need to put as much distance between himself and them. Turning, he slowly strode away, hands on his hips, taking great gulps of air. He wouldn't have run if it wasn't for the arrows that chased him away into the forest.

Finally, he reached an edge. It looked out across the forest, the sea of leaves untainted by the horror of the fires. He smiled at the carpet of pinks, oranges, browns and greens, constantly moving, constantly changing. Above it all, in the soft pink of dawn, he spotted a dragon soaring above the trees. It was one he'd seen before, a long time ago, but not a very common one. His brow creased as it came closer. As long as it wasn't the Skrill, he knew he wasn't in danger. However, it did seem to be heading right for him.

There was a shriek in the distance, far off behind him. The hairs on the back of his neck prickled uncomfortably. It was an animal sound, but not from any dragon or creature he'd ever encountered before. The ground trembled beneath his feet with the pounding sound of a hundred mighty hooves. His heart missed a beat.

"Tuffnut!" A voice came crying on the wind. He jumped, staring about, searching for the source. His eyes caught on the dragon still approaching. He knew that dragon, that voice, even the little figure on its back, waving her hand wildly.

"Ruffnut!" He cried out joyously, throwing his arms above his head. The young man was finally saved. He breathed a sigh of relief. The pounding was becoming louder. The smirk of elation dropped off his face as he span around. There, in the forest, dark shapes galloped towards him at speed, their feet thudding loudly on the hard-packed earth. The twin took a step back, suddenly feeling slightly sick as this unknown army raced towards him.

Scauldy was right above him now, and Ruffnut was peering through the trees at the odd creatures that had transfixed her brother on the ground. She saw flashes of colour, greys, blacks and browns, each with a streak upon their back: a human rider. She tapped the Scauldron, urging him closer to the ground.

"Tuffnut!" She yelled, "Grab my hand!" Her brother span about and reached up as high as he could, but she was too far away. Taking his fate into his own hands, he made a mad dash for the edge of the drop, leaping off with hands outstretched, trying to grab the dragon as it came level with the top. However, he gravely misjudged the distance, missing Scauldy by inches, fingers brushing those of his sister, and plummeting down and down, to the floor far below.

Ruffnut clapped a hand to her forehead in dismay. Of all the stupid things her idiot brother had done, this was by far the stupidest. She peered back into the cover of the trees as her brother groaned, sprawled on the floor below her, trying to catch another glimpse of one of the creatures. Suddenly, they both saw them in the daylight. One came thundering on to the ledge, skidding to a halt with a whinny, skipping and hopping on its spindly legs. It was of chestnut brown colour, with bright, shining fur and a long mane of black hair running the length of its thick neck. Its tail was the same colour, hairs longer than Valka's braids (which were rather impressive) swishing as though they were controlled by something beneath. Its wide, black, intelligent eyes and fat, quivering lips intriguing the

dragon rider.

More of the beasts skittered to a halt at the drop, too scared to leap down it. Some kicked out with their hind legs, others rearing up and striking out with their fronts, before a commander gave an unheard order to go around. They would find some other way down to pick up the man still struggling to his feet below. The harrowing thought suddenly struck Ruffnut: she had to get down to her brother before they did.

_I did it! Technically, this is before midnight, so I'm still on schedule! Sorry about the wait again, I will upload every two days from now on so that you're not left waiting (or rather, I'm not missing the deadline and annoying you). Anywho, New chapter! What happens next? Find out in two days time. _

5. Chapter 5

Sorry to have kept you waiting for so long. Here it is! The new chapter!

IMPORTANT: For those of you who missed the update, for review replies check Chapter 4 and for information about why I was AWOL, read the note on my profile.

Guest: Great devotion, indeed! Thanks, I'm obviously sorry for the wait...

:(I google-translated the review) Glad you're enjoying it! They do finally meet, but what next?

A new sense of urgency gripped Ruffnut as she coaxed Scauldy downwards. Her brother was just struggling to his feet, his hair sticking out at funny angles, entwined with leaves and sticks. There was a slight cut across his right eye, a bead of blood welling around it, but he seemed oblivious until he wiped it halfway across his forehead. His sister rolled her eyes, having seen it too many times before.

The Scauldron's wide wings were too big to fly any lower and remain airborne. The trees were tall and straight here. Scauldy gave a groan, turning back to his rider in apology, huffing. The young woman sighed, then clambered up his neck and leant out from his neck, reaching as far down as her long arms would reach. With any luck, her brother would be able to grab on and she could haul him aboard.

"Tuffnut!" She called, catching her brother by surprise, "Grab my hand! We need to get out of here!"

"What were those things?" He yelled as he lifted his arm above his head. The rumble of their hooves grew louder. The creatures had found another way down the drop. Tuffnut stretched up, but he couldn't quite reach.

"Come on!" His sister snarled, "Stretch!"

Even on tiptoes, Tuffnut's fingertips could only brush those of his twin, and the dark shapes were looming out of the forest once again.

Their sharp cries echoed through the trees, chillingly close. Ruffnut could see them getting closer and closer. Her brother jumped up and grabbed her wrist, and for a moment, all seemed well, but then his grip failed and he stumbled back onto the ground. On the backs of those strange, galloping creatures, men prepared cross-bows, ready to fire upon the dragon. Ruffnut instantly made the painful decision and withdrew her hand.

"Run, Tuffnut! Go, quickly, just go!" She cried out, watching the horror fill his eyes as he realised just how close they were. Then, he was gone, dashing off between the trees. Ruffnut watched helplessly as a few of the creatures followed on. The braver ones stayed and fired upon her dragon, bolts wedged deep under his skin so that he cried out and fired a blast of his water, but by then, they had already disappeared. Ruffnut was left to relieve her dragon of the painful arrows and follow the chase in the air.

Tuffnut pounded between the thick trunks, trying to put as much distance between himself and the odd, four-legged creatures and their riders. The nature of the terrain gave him an advantage, hindering the animals that had to bend through the trees. They were unable to get up to their top speed, while Tuffnut was free to run as fast as he could, and he was determined to make it as difficult as possible for the thundering hooves to catch him. He squeezed through tight gaps, twisted around trees and dived down from rocks.

Then, the obstacles stopped coming. The trees thinned out, ground flattened and became smooth. The creatures came closer and closer, hot on his heels. One struck out, thundering up beside him. Its rider made a grab for Tuffnut. Ducking, the young man looked up, heart hammering with fear. The beast looked back with shining black eyes, jowls frothing, flanks heaving. Tuffnut's eyes clapped onto the shining stirrup in which the man's foot was held, so close to his head. Thinking quickly, he grabbed the soldier's ankle and shoved it up, unseating him. It was simple luck that a tree passed at that moment, snatching the man from his beast's saddle and tossing him to the ground.

Confused, the creature put its ears back, slowing down, but the twin saw another opportunity. He jumped forth, snatching hold of the saddle and hauling himself up, struggling to get his leg over the creature's back. However, somehow, he managed to get a grip, slipping a foot into each stirrup, grabbing the flapping leather straps that the men used to steer. Looking behind him, he could see the way the men slammed their heels into the creature's sides. Copying them, he tried to replicate the action, and was almost thrown from the saddle himself as the beast put on a staggering burst of speed.

She peered through the canopy, scanning through the trees to catch any glimpse she could of the chase going on below. Scauldry gave an uneasy moan, picking up on his rider's tension. She reached forward to give him a reassuring pat. Suddenly, she spotted a flash below, heading out onto a flat plateau of land where the forest thinned out along the cliffs. _Oh no... cliffs! _She thought agonisingly. If he wasn't looking where he was going (and knowing Tuffnut, he wasn't), her brother was liable to pitch right over the edge.

Tuffnut urged the beast on faster as the other soldiers drew near. He'd never experienced such a strange, galloping gait. However, whatever it lacked in comfort, the creature certainly made up for in

speed. Striking out with its strong hooves, brown mane flying gracefully, it ate up ground like a Night Fury round a racecourse. Nothing could stop them now...

"Except that cliff..." Tuffnut groaned as he saw the ground fall away meters before him. He was thinking quickly again, turning ideas around in his mind, but he settled quickly on his only option.

"Come on, thing! Jump off the edge of the cliff! My sister will catch us, trust me!"

However, his beast certainly did not trust him. As it realised what was coming, it gave a shrill whinny and dug its hind legs into the dirt, skidding to a halt. The man on its back was not so lucky. The brother went flying over its shoulders, and the next he knew, everything went black.

Short chapter is short. There was no way I could lengthen this, either in the story or just time-wise. As you may have noticed, I'm not having much of a chance to write lately. The updates might come as much as weekly in some cases. However, you know me, I always strive to get these out as quickly as I possibly can. The next is on its way and I won't let it be past the deadline this time!

6. Chapter 6

Next, next, next! What happened after Tuff blacked out? Find out here!

Hiccupisnotuseless: Yeah, strange... Well, actually, I'll reveal what they are later in the story, because Hiccup knows, but the twins don't read, so they don't. I would actually love Dean DeBlois to read my stories, but it'll never happen, so I'm not too worried.

Guest: Actually, nope. Read on!

Guest: Thanks! Hmmm, I won't disclose any of the plot yet! Just keep thinking what you're thinking, my friend

1248: Awh, that was really sweet! I was expecting a bad review there, but that made me really happy! Thanks!

Everything was so dark and cold, to begin with. Then, like a sludge clearing from his head, everything began to come back to him. It was like waking up from a particularly deep sleep, save for the fact that his head was throbbing brutally and he couldn't move. He tried to clench his fist, to open his eyes, but nothing would respond. A panic rose in his chest, shaking through him as he tried ever-more desperately to wake himself up, to move his stubborn limbs, to shout out for help. He had lost control. He wanted to scream, to shout, to suppress the urge to sob and cry as he began to fear the worst. He was paralysed, trapped within his own body. He couldn't do anything. So alone. So isolated. He couldn't even control his breathing. There was nothing he could do to quell the raw panic and fear that was consuming him. His attempts to cry for help were coming out as mere whines and grunts. He just prayed to Odin that someone could hear him.

"Wake up!" A sharp sound, a sharp slap across his face. He bolted

upright, heaving for breath heavily, though he instantly wished he hadn't. His vision was blurred to the point of blindness, his head whirling and throbbing, his body a pulp of pain. Hunching over, he let out a groan, lifting one shaking hand to his brow, where he traced a scab of congealed blood running through his hair.

"Hey, are you alright?" That voice. He knew it. He looked up at the spinning figure before him, reaching out towards it. A hand shot out, snatching his wrist. "Stop it! You're being really creepy." His sister, Ruffnut. He remembered now.

"What... what happened?" He managed to croak, before coughing dryly as the smudge of his sister began to grow solid. He rubbed his eyes crudely.

"You smashed your head on the rock face when you fell. Seriously, are you okay? You're kinda scaring me..." Ruffnut's brow creased in concern, growing into a face of pure disgust as her brother pitched over and retched over the side of the dragon. "Well... at least you didn't chuck over Scauldy," She shrugged sheepishly, quite unlike her usual self.

"Where am I?" He groaned, hugging his knees tightly.

"You're on Scauldy, idiot. We're flying over the island."

"And... how did I get here?" Tuffnut's foggy head was confusing him. He tried rubbing his eyes again.

"You were lucky Scauldy and I were nearby. We saw you heading for the cliff and came down to catch you. You must've knocked yourself out when you fell. I thought you were dead." Her matter-of-fact tone made him wrinkle his nose.

"Yeah, well, I wish I was. I feel awful" He rubbed his head tenderly, still feeling a little sick and dizzy. Ruffnut tried to hide her worry by turning away.

"Yeah, well, you'll feel better when we get there," She replied breezily, casting a glance over her shoulder as her brother lay down on his back.

"And where is 'there', exactly?"

"Well, if we're going to take back Berk, we need backup. Besides, it might do you good to spend time with someone who actually likes you." He chortled at the remark, knowing she was simply joking to make him feel better. Then, his brow creased.

"Wait, who are you talking about? Did other people get out?"

"Not that I know of." She tried to keep the emotion out of her voice, but it didn't quite work. Her tone darkened. "We've got to try to get everyone out. You know that as well as I do. We're going to get Torch, Tuff. He's a big, powerful dragon. The Berserkers won't know what to do with him."

"Great idea, sis! I was wondering when I'd see Torch again." Tuffnut found himself smiling, the bright thoughts taking the edge off his headache until, by the time Scauldy began to descend, it had all but

cleared up.

Scauldy dived hurridly into the ocean, shaking himself out and gliding through the waves. Tuffnut slumped against a large, flat rock, sliding down into a seated position and breathing a deep sigh of relief. He felt thoroughly drained and tired. His head fell back against the rock, his eyes sliding closed. Soon, he was snoring loudly as the sky began to turn pink. His sister was sat beside him, but she couldn't even tempt her eyes closed. Too many things rushed round her head, her body trembling all the time. Her dragon hadn't yet returned from his swim, but she stared out across the waves as though it might call him back.

Though she hadn't eaten for hours, she didn't feel hungry. All she felt was a deep sickness that ran through her whole body. She hugged her knees tightly, resting her chin on them and shifting her gaze to the ground. Ruffnut moved the sand with her toes, watching the grains tumble all over each other and sighing softly.

"Aren't you gonna sleep?" Her brother's voice made her jump. She looked up and tried to hold his gaze, but somehow, she just couldn't look him in the eyes.

"I'm not tired," She sniffed nonchalantly.

"Really? I was." He looked away from her, blinking in the dimming light. "You know, earlier, you said I was scaring you."

"Yeah, so? You were. All pale and sick and moaning like a Zippleback with a sore tooth."

"Well, now you're scaring me." He swallowed, as though the words were hard to say. Ruffnut blinked in shock.

"How?"

"Well, you're pale, you look sick, you don't sleep, you don't joke or hit me or anything. It's like you're a completely different person." Tuffnut looked at his sister again, eyebrows raised, watching her lips tremble as she tried to battle her emotions and produce an answer. A lump grew in his own throat.

"Well... what did you expect?" She finally replied, her voice full of gravel. Her watery eyes met his, finally, if only for a moment.

"I was hoping that you could make everything better, like Mum does. And even if you can't do that, then... promise me I won't lose you, sis. I need you as much as you need me."

Though she tried to reply, words just wouldn't come. Her mouth opened and closed as she tried to reply, but all that came out was a dry croak. Giving up, she simply looked up at him. She saw the grit and dirt and blood plastering his face, obscuring his pale skin, the mud streaked through his platinum hair, and yet, his blue eyes still glowed with all the life they usually held. It felt like hers would look like empty voids compared to his.

A dry sob echoed unnaturally from her throat, her body contorting, before she snatching him up in a warm hug, clinging to him like a child.

"We need to fix this, you and me." She sighed into his neck. He looked away, thoroughly embarrassed.

"Yeah, sure, okay..." The punch that landed in his gut took him by surprise. He gave a strangled choke. "Hey! What was that for?"

"For being you." She snatched his wrists. "Don't even think of retaliating, unless you want me to be sick."

"What? Why would you..." His eyes lit up with realisation, then his brow creased deeply. "What did they do to you?"

"Doesn't matter. Scauldy's coming." She was on her feet so quickly, Tuffnut didn't even have a chance to grab her. The brother stared after his twin as she headed to the waterline to receive her dragon back onto the land. Then, shaking his head, he followed her.

Dinner that night was a quiet affair, Tuffnut wolfing down the fish Scauldy had caught with a ferocious intensity, completely missing the way his twin picked at hers slowly, forcing down every mouthful. Only her dragon nudging her in the back kept her eating until the food was gone. Ruffnut then stretched out under the stars, staring up into the black sky, her arms wrapped around her stomach.

Her brother watched her from a distance, knowing there was something she wasn't telling him. She coughed drily, drawing her knees up as though it hurt. He scowled, taking the shell they had been using to drink out of and filling it with water from the stream behind him. He then offered it to her. Ruffnut downed it in seconds, staring at the iridescent inner shell and sniffing, before she tossed it back at her brother.

"You know, I escaped from jail all on my own." He tried to start a conversation.

"Yeah?" His sister sounded only mildly interested as she lay back again.

"Yup. There were stones in the floor that I used to cut my ropes, then I broke a plank in the wall that was all rotten and burned and squeezed through. I lost my jacket, though. They cross-bowed it to a tree. Had to leave it behind."

"Uh-huh." Ruffnut didn't even bother to look over at her brother. In fact, she was quite enjoying the relaxing night air. As for her brother's company, well, at least she wasn't always on her guard anymore.

"What about you?" He probed, leaning forward expectantly.

"Ran away from the fires. Got caught. Scauldy saved me." Her dragon perked up at the sound of his name. Tuffnut scowled slightly. "He was the one who put out all the fires. He did it for me. I'm glad he found me, you know. I wouldn't have made it without him."

Tuffnut sighed, giving in. Whatever was hurting Ruffnut, she certainly wasn't going to say anything tonight. Lying down, he watched as she closed her eyes and quickly dropped off to sleep. The Scauldron stretched his wing out in an arc, covering them both and

giving them the heat of his great, cauldron-like belly. Tuffnut was very quickly overcome and was soon snoring away under the bright stars.

END. Not really, but still. What happens next? Wait two days and find out! This was such an intense chapter that I just kept on writing and writing. It was wonderful, and I finished a day early, which means I can now start on the next chapter, which is also wonderful. You see how much I can get done when School of Dragons goes down?

7. Chapter 7

_Another chapter? I'm so kind to you all! And 7 chapters already. Wow! As some of you may have seen, I was ill the morning I meant to upload, which meant that there was no chance I could get it finished in time. However, I very quickly recovered and now I'm perfectly fine again, save for a headache. _

Hiccupisnotuseless: Here is Torch! As for Eret, well, he isn't really in this story. I can't have too many characters or I have to balance them all, so I'm saving that for The Runaway 2, where he will have a bigger part.

Guest: Oh! My bad, friend, I must have missed the meaning of what you were saying. Whoops! Hehe... I think it's important to have good communication with fans, whether you're just a Fanfiction writer like me or a professional writer. People still wanna know when they can read your stuff.

Razor95: Hmm, I'm not sure killing characters off is really my style. I know I did it in The Runaway, but Gustav was only a minor character in the scheme of things. However, I promise there will be dark drama later on in the story. Just watch out for the Dagur bits!

It was early morning when Ruffnut kicked her brother awake.

"Get up," She growled gruffly, "We need to go." Her brother murmured something unintelligible and rolled over, leaving his sister to sigh and stalk grumpily away. Tuffnut tucked his head beneath his arm to shut out her complaining, closing his eyes lazily and smiling to himself, until the icy cold of sea water dumped over his head made him leap to his feet. Ruffnut tossed away the shell, giving him a swift kick for good measure, then scampered up onto her dragon's back before her twin had the chance to retaliate. Tuffnut chuckled as he looked up at her. She was back to her normal self again, if only for a moment.

Scauldy made short work of the flight across the island. His wide wings pounded tirelessly, carrying them at an astounding pace over the treetops. Ruffnut was tense and quiet the whole time, looking for something, her eyes flicking back and forth repeatedly, fingers tapping against her leg. Tuffnut leant on his hand, yawning. He was thoroughly bored, unable to concentrate on anything for very long. Even if he knew what his sister was looking for, he wouldn't have been able to help, so he left her to it.

"There." She pointed as the simple statement passed her lips. Her

twin followed her finger, gasping as he caught sight of what she was looking at. A circular, spiralling mark cut through the trees, leaving a clearing open wide and shot through with scorch marks circling out from the centre. The ground still smoked where the grass had been singed. The mark was obviously fresh. Tuffnut knew with a jolt that he had seen this before.

"Is that a Typhoomerang mark?" He asked incredulously, shining with joy as his sister nodded, a slight smirk on her face.

Scauldy landed in a clearing not far away, settling to let the two excited twins off his back. They slid down with ease, scampering around to stroke the dragon's head.

Ruffnut turned to her brother. "Go on, then," She smiled, jabbing his shoulder, "Go get him." Without another word, her brother strode away, lifting his hands and cupping them around his mouth to shout out the name of his dragon.

"Torch! Where are you?" He yelled. There was no sound, as if the whole forest had been silenced. Scauldy lowered his head, nibbling an itch on his flank. "Torch! Come on out, we need you!" Again, nothing. Not even the sounds of birds chirping. He sighed heavily, turning to his sister and scowling. "This is pointless. There's no way he can hear-"

All of a sudden, a roar echoed through the trees. Scauldy's head shot up into the air, looking around, tense and alert. There was a chorus of birds chattering as they took wing in panic, a rush of air through the pines. Tuffnut stumbled back, beginning to question the origins of the sounds. The last thing they needed now was a wild dragon thrown into their already unfortunate mix. Behind him, Ruffnut desperately tried to calm her Scauldron down as he leapt to his feet and swung his head from side to side in anger, his flat teeth bared.

Another rush of wind, and all of a sudden, the sun was blocked out by a huge shape shooting up above the tree line. The dragon pounded up into the air, wings outstretched gloriously. They reached all the way back to the base of his tail, two small legs tucked neatly beneath his hips. His great, horned head turned their way, bright yellow eyes wide and alert. His whole body glowed crimson, paling along his neck to a long, white head. He soared above them in a circle, jaws stuffed full of teeth champing as he studied them intently. Finally, satisfied, the Typhoomerang swept up and descended, stretching out its small legs and landing with the utmost grace upon the ground before them.

Instantly, Scauldy charged forward, placing himself between the new dragon and his friends and letting out a loud, screeching roar in warning. The Typhoomerang bristled indignantly, drawing himself up to his full, imposing height, enormous wings flared defensively. Tuffnut glanced back at his sister, worried about what the dragons would do to one another should they fight. He had seen how long Torch kept a grudge against Toothless many years ago, and how mistrustful Scauldy was of new people and dragons. His sister didn't even make eye-contact. She simply strode out between the dragons, her arms up, catching their attention.

"Pack it in, you two!" She roared, her teeth flashing at them both.

The Typhoomerang and Scauldron jumped back in alarm. "We have more important things going on right now! Scauldy, this is Torch, a friend of Tuffnut's." She gestured to the huge dragon, who stared curiously at the Scauldron, smacking his lips as though considering whether or not to trust the creature. "And Torch, this is Scauldy, my dragon." The blue dragon tilted his head to one side, then looked down at his human, who was clambering up his shoulder to her spot at the base of his neck. Tuffnut followed his sister's lead, giving Torch a quick hug before leaping aboard and following her up into the air.

The smack rang out, echoing around the chamber, followed by the stamping of furious boots as Dagur left the poor messenger sprawled in the dirt behind him and stormed out of the building into the street. Thundering down the steps, he let his scathing cries ring out around the island.

"Where is Bloodtooth? Where is he?! He must report to me immediately!"

His hawk-like eyes scanned the village and found his target; the military commander, the great, hulking man in charge of his armies, was ignoring his leader and calmly loading a crate of treasure to be transported back to the homeland. The young chief gave a screech of anguish, striding up to him with his cheeks blood red with anger.

"What is the meaning of this?!" He screamed in the man's ear. Commander Bloodtooth hardly winced. "That child told me that you even had the cavalry at your disposal and you still couldn't catch those pesky Berkian riders!"

"That is correct, sir." Bloodtooth nodded without a hint of emotion.

"Well, it's not good enough! There were a hundred men in that detachment! Against two riders! They're not even the difficult ones, they're the twins!" He spat out the word like a bad taste.

"I know, sir." Bloodtooth was surprisingly good tempered in the face of his seething master. Dagur snarled.

"I'm not happy with this. I'm in my right mind to have you killed for treason!"

"Sir, you're never in your right mind. That's why you're known as 'deranged'."

Dagur gave a laugh as though he was excepting praise, rocking back on his heels and grinning like a child. "Oh, you always know what to say! Fine, ready the Skrill. There's no way those pesky riders can match its power."

"Wanna bet?" Dagur froze as he was rewarding his captain, spinning about to meet the eyes of one of his prisoners. As the new chief of the island, he'd had every house converted into a prison cell along the main street. That way, his paranoid mind could rest easy knowing that there was always someone keeping an eye on the captured dragon riders. The only problem was that the riders could always see everything that was going on and could interact with him and his men. This was no exception. He stalked confidently towards the face at the

bars, blackened, bloodied and burnt, peering out with intelligent emerald eyes.

"Oh Hiccup, my brother, you don't honestly believe that those two knuckle-heads could possibly pose a threat to my Berserker armada?" He scoffed scornfully. Hiccup scowled darkly.

"One, I'm not your brother," He spat viciously, "And two, they're stronger and smarter than they look."

"Stronger than my Skrill? Hah!" He snorted. Behind him, as if in answer, there came an echoing roar. Upon a makeshift raised platform, Dagur's Skrill was rising to its feet, shaking out its wings and stamping its stumpy legs. Its long tail lashed the air violently, purple-black scales shining in the sunlight. Below its crested head, its forward-set eyes scoured the skies, teeth gnashing in its long jaws.

Dagur turned back to Hiccup, a sparkling look of victory spread all over his face. "So what do you think, Hiccup? Can your puny dragon riders stand up to the might of my Skrill?" When Hiccup sealed his lips, the Berserker chief delved deeper under his skin. "Look at what's happened. Look at what's become of your tribe, your father's tribe. What would Stoick think of his son now? You're a failure, and you always were."

"_Shut up!_" Hiccup's hand shout out from between the bars of the cage, grabbing Dagur by the scruff of his neck and pulling him against the door with enough force to split his lip. With an enraged shout, the Berserker chief tore Hiccup's hand roughly away from his throat and waved a hand at his dragon. The creature reared up and let forth a stunning blast of electricity.

The volt passed straight over his commander's head and struck the bars of the cage. Hiccup gave a cry and stumbled back into the blackness of the cell, disappearing from view, while nearby came the answering call of a Night Fury.

"_I'm gonna stop it here for now, I think. Dagur is one mean dude, but also clever, using the way metal attracts electricity to his advantage. Smart! Anyway, sorry about the wait, hopefully the next will come a little faster._"

8. Chapter 8

"_New chapter, new question. What happened to Hiccup after he was electrocuted by the Skrill? Well, you'll have to wait to find out. Mwahaha!_"

"_Side note about my health: turns out it was a migraine, which would explain the colours in my eyes, mild head-ache and hands going numb, along with the sickness. Nothing serious and I'm back up and running again now! However, I was quite worried when I suddenly lost the feeling in my hands, so if you're ever worried about something like that, check an internet site you can trust (for me, it was the NHS) because usually, it's nothing serious._"

"_ 1248: Need no longer, my friend!_"

Hiccupisnotuseless: Of course the Skrill is back! How on earth would Dagur manage to capture the whole island without it? He would have a lot of trouble now that Cloudjumper is there and all the new dragons!

Guest: Never fear, I am fully recovered now! Hopefully that won't happen again for a loooooong time. Ehehe

"You wanna race?" Tuffnut raised his eyebrows cheekily. His sister snorted jovially.

"Sure, but you better be prepared to lose!" He quirked an eyebrow at this, mocking her by sticking out his tongue. With simple shouts, their dragons took off into the sky, beating hard to gain speed. Immediately, it was clear that Scauldy was carrying too much extra weight. His swollen belly slowed him down as the powerful Typhoomerang took the lead. Torch looked back and snorted as though he was teasing his new friend.

"We need to lose all this water!" Ruffnut called forward. Her dragon seemed to be thinking the same thing, and he stretched out his neck, letting his whole fill of liquid go at once. The stream of steaming water hissed down between the trees, leaving the dragon much lighter. Scauldy's head lifted quickly, jumping forward in the air as his powerful wings came into their own. Very soon, he was closing in on Torch.

Tuffnut tapped his dragon on the shoulder and jerked a thumb back towards their competitors. Torch snorted, putting on a burst of speed of his own, his rider kneeling up between his wings. The two dragons were almost shoulder-to-shoulder as they rounded the enormous mountain that stretched up behind the village of Berk, into which the Great Hall was cut. Steps wound up it's sheer, treacherous, rocky slopes, leading all the way up to a little house perched on top. Tuffnut reached out, almost able to touch the balcony platform from which their village elder predicted the weather. They circled the mountain once before streaking out towards the ocean.

Below, the blackened husk of Berk sat huddled in misery, only a few of the guards lamps and torches lighting the once bustling, busy streets. Ruffnut felt a rock beginning to form in the pit of her stomach, a lump coming to her throat. Below, the twins could hear the frenzied screams of a Night Fury. Something had to be happening to Hiccup. Toothless wouldn't cry like that otherwise. Tuffnut's brow creased in thought.

"I have an idea," He called over, slowing his Typhoomerang down and beginning to circle high above the village. His sister scowled, disapproving.

"Can't we just get away from here and be done with it?" She whined. The sick feeling was creeping back into her gut. Her brother shook his head.

"Just trust me, and follow me." Torch suddenly folded his wings, the leather snapping close to his sides as he turned his shoulder to the ground and plummeted down. Ruffnut resisted the urge to scream after him. The Typhoomerang's body span as he shot head-first towards the village below.

"Well, Scauldy, I guess he's going to get killed if we don't trust him. Hey, maybe he has got an idea for once." Bracing her legs against the Scauldron's wing-joints, she clung on as he, too, went into a dive.

Torch flared his wings meters from the ground, swooping ferociously across the skyline, roaring like thunder. The guards scattered as he came around for another pass, reaching out with his deadly toe-claws and ripping through the buildings below him. Something told him they were prison cells. Perhaps it was the smell, or the bars in the windows. From the depths, a dragon sprang – or rather, fluttered. Meatlug landed sedately in the centre of the street, shaking out a body that looked as though it were made from jagged rocks and smeared with dark, sticky mud. Her tiny wings were a blur on her back, her thick jaws crushing everything in sight, so full of teeth that her mouth couldn't close.

The soldiers were in tatters, rag-tag groups scattering this way and that as another dragon swooped down from above. Scauldy took a deep breath, his chin swelling, but all that came out were simple wisps of steam. Too late, Ruffnut realised, that her dragon had ditched its load of water at the start of the race. Defenceless, Scauldy swept back up into the air, just in time to catch a glimpse of a small figure stomping down the steps from the Hall. Turning the other way, Ruffnut watched her brother and his dragon streak across the sky, taking out yet another building. From it burst forth the flames of a Monstrous Nightmare.

"Get me close to Tuffnut!" She called to the dragon. Scauldy gave a trumpeting call, stopping the Typhoomerang in his tracks and flying in close. "Tuff, that's Dagur at the bottom of the steps! We need to get out of here before he rallies the forces and strikes back."

"No!" Her brother's lip curled, "We can't leave without Hiccup and Toothless. You get the dragon, I'll get our chief!" When he saw his sister's worried look, he smirked at her. "Trust me, it won't take long. We'll get them and be out of here before you know it!" With a final nod, the twins parted again.

Without water, Scauldy was almost powerless from the air. He flew high above the range of the Berserker's crossbows, scouring the ground with his sharp eyes for any sign of the chief's dragon. His rider was doing the same, her brow furrowed deeply. Suddenly, she caught sight of a flash of black scales. She pointed hurriedly

"There!" She cried, holding on as the dragon whipped around to look. He gave a cry of alarm, fluttering wildly to gain altitude. "What's wrong? Scauldy, what are you-" But suddenly, she didn't need to ask. There was a wild screech, followed by the snapping of leather wings. A purple-black blur was shooting towards them, mouth agape as it charged its electrical attack. The Scauldron threw himself aside as the bolt passed them, dodging it by inches. He fell back towards the earth as though he was hit, Ruffnut clinging on around his neck, fighting the urge to scream. It was almost too real. She began to fear the worst. Was he hurt?

Scauldy's wings flashed out, bringing him quickly out of the dive. He thrust them powerfully, coming in to land heavily. Looking back at

his rider, the dragon gave a groan, then reared up and threw her off. Ruffnut landed in a heap on the ground, guards and soldiers heading her way.

"Scauldy! What are you doing?" She yelled in shock. He nudged her shoulder, snorting, then turned back to face the oncoming soldiers and Skrill. "Wait... you're protecting me so I can find Toothless! Thanks, Scauldy, I owe you one!" With that, she turned, chose her destination and dashed away down a track that was obviously freshly trampled by many feet. She reasoned that Toothless would be caged away from his rider and the rest of the town to protect them all. Sure enough, as she came closer to the end, the ground became scorched with thousands of marks: plasma blasts. They scorched the earth for meters around them.

She heard a roar as her eyes alighted on a cage, set in the centre of the clearing. The metal of the bars was thicker than her waist in places, but had still suffered heavy damage from the dragon inside thrashing about and blasting everything in sight. And there, inside, she could see the bright green eyes of a Night Fury glaring out at her. Toothless screeched, leaping up at the bars furiously, already charging a blast in his throat. There was a neon blue glow running like a dorsal stripe down his back, from his head to his tail.

"Wait! Toothless, it's me, I'm here to get you out!" Ruffnut stood still, her arms above her head as Toothless' ear flaps sprang up at the back of his head. His mouth closed, rounded head pushing itself between the bars, eyes wide and shining with fear. Who knows what they'd done to him while he was trapped in here. Ruffnut hushed him, reaching out to touch his nose. It almost brought tears to her eyes to think how scared and alone he was here.

"It's alright now," she whispered, reaching into her jacket for her knife. Toothless pulled back as she thrust it into the lock and turned. The door sprang open, and for a moment, Toothless just stood there, bemused, until he jumped forward and galloped away up the pathway, leaving Ruffnut behind him. "Toothless! Stop!" Her shouts were useless, so she simply sprinted after him, hoping she might find her own dragon as well as the alpha.

There was a familiar crash of splintering wood as Torch's talons ripped the roof off yet another building. Tuffnut calculated that this one had to hold his chief. It was closest to the Great Hall, meaning Dagur could keep an eye on him, and so could the other guards. It also looked the most heavily fortified. Sure enough, as he looked down behind him, he saw a wiry man clamber out of the wreckage, looking around himself, bewildered. Torch turned back, heading down to pick him up, but to his surprise, Hiccup shouted out to him to turn around.

"Go back! Get out of here! We'll regroup in the forest!" And with that, their chief took off like a lightning bolt, streaking across town. Torch beat up into the air, fluttering in confusion. Below, Scauldy was taking off in a panic, blood streaming down his sides. He was making for the ocean. A black shape streaked out from the trees behind him, explosions ringing out, bursts of violet flame. Toothless screeched for his rider. Tuffnut looked between them, watching Hiccup waving his arms wildly. Soldiers closed in between them, swords flashing in the weak sunlight. The two turned in opposite directions,

desperate to escape.

It didn't look like Hiccup was going to make it. Berserkers were closing in, along with the Skrill, which was shrieking wildly, its tail lashing. A look of determination crossed both Typhoomerang and rider's faces. Torch gave a mocking roar, diving down and bathing the creature in fire, along with the men on the ground. It gave Hiccup just the chance he needed to make a break for the trees, crossbow bolts following him. However, the dragon and rider didn't have time to dwell on their friend's escape, for now the Skrill was enraged, and it was coming straight for them.

DundunDUN! Cliffhanger! I bet you hate me now, but you know how it is. Cliffhangers keep readers reading, and I love ending my chapter on a cliffhanger, which is why I'd never make a good novel writer, because the chapters would be super short. Anyway, hope you enjoyed! Don't forget to R+R.

9. Chapter 9

New chapter! I really want to start on The Runaway 2, at least getting a little taster out there for everyone (Which will be posted on the end of The Runaway 1 when I finally do it!), but I can't when I have this story already 2 days behind. I never seem to get time to write on Weekends, which doesn't make sense unless you think about the fact that I'm always doing something with different organisations or my family.

Snowflake: Well, one should hope so! I think we can safely assume so.

Guest: I've been working on a little soft-toy of Toothless, hand-sewing it and I hoped to get it done by the end of the summer. But thanks to this and the summer art project I didn't do in the beginning, I don't think I'll be able to. Oh well, I'll do it sometime!

Instead of retreating, as his rider was frantically asking him to do, Torch bared his teeth with a sinister snarl as the purple-black Skrill came closer. Its whole body crackled with energy. Tuffnut screamed at his dragon once more, not believing that he could possibly take on a dragon that had once defeated Toothless himself. Torch stooped and dived to avoid one bolt of charged energy, swerving as only a Typhoomerang could as another narrowly missed his wing. His glittering flame-orange scales were lit up with every bright flash as he put on quite a show for the guards gathered beneath.

Despite orders from their chief, the Berserkers were too fascinated by the dragon fight to continue chasing down either the Hooligan chief or his powerful dragon, nor were they very concerned as the vibrant Scauldron returned to pick up his rider, dripping with sea water. Ruffnut stumbled up to him, scrambling aboard before she lay across his neck in exhaustion. He spread his wings and heaved himself into the air, humming discontentedly. He wasn't sure whether his rider was okay or not, and as soon as he was able, he craned his neck back to stare at her.

"Don't look like that!" She wheezed, her hands on her hips as she regained her breath. "That was a lot of running, and my lungs still

aren't better from when I was captured!" When the Scauldron continued to murmur unhappily, she gave him a hearty slap to the neck, laughing encouragingly. "Come on, you worry too much! You'd think I'd been through a war!"

Ruffnut looked out at her brother and his dragon, watching them swoop and dive with just as much interest as Dagur's troops. Then, she sighed softly, looking behind her, over the forest into which her chief had escaped. She could hear the shrieks of his dragon echoing faintly through the trees as Toothless searched in vain for his rider. Her brow creased.

"Scauldy, we need to go find Toothless. When we find him, we can find Hiccup, and when we find him, then we've got our leaders back. They'll have a plan, I just know it." Leaving her brother to fend for himself, she closed her eyes as her dragon made the turn to take them off in the direction of the calls. The Scauldron could obviously pinpoint where they emanated from with far more accuracy, as he tilted his head from side to side, concentrating hard. Ruffnut scoured the trees, looking for any breaks that might give them the clear sight they needed to spot him.

There was a sudden rush of black in the corner of her eye. She started, staring into the trees where she caught sight of it, catching another and another. A black shape heading through the forest, in hot pursuit of something. Scauldy was looking the same way. The young woman nodded. It had to be him.

Flying Scauldy closer, she peered more closely at the ground around her. She could clearly see the Night Fury, stopping to take a quick, panting breath before he set off once again. She pointed out the direction for her dragon, though he was quite capable of seeing it for himself, and they swooped down above him, edging closer with every wing beat. Toothless could have easily outpaced them if he were flying, but due to his accident 7 years ago, he now couldn't fly without the aid of his rider, and for the first time in her life, Ruffnut appreciated this, for it made her task a lot easier.

"Toothless!" She shouted down to him. His ears flickered, but save for that, he didn't slow in his pace at all. "Hey, stop a minute! We're here to help you!" Ruffnut's shouts didn't seem to make any difference to him. He was fixated on this one task and this task only. The twin took a breath, hoping she could find the words to convince the highly intelligent dragon to listen. "Look, Toothless, I know you want to find Hiccup, but this isn't the way to do it. You're alone and you're scared, I know, but please, let us help you. It's much easier to search from the air, don't you think?"

For second, it looked like the dragon was completely ignoring her. He kept on galloping at his alarming pace, unmoved. But slowly, slowly, his head turned towards her, and he looked up to meet her eyes. In a couple of strides, he gathered himself, tightly coiled like a spring, and then he soared up into the sky, snatching hold of Scauldy's back just behind his wing. The Scauldron was pulled heavily towards him, trying to stay level, though it was hard. His front claws dug in, hind paws scrabbling for a purchase, but he was beginning to slide back. The dragon was too wet and too sleek. He just couldn't hold on...

"Hang on!" Ruffnut threw herself at him, snatching one of his shoulder straps in both hands and heaving strongly, giving him just the pull he needed to bring a hind paw up and push himself into the centre of the Scauldron's back. Finally safe, both dragon and women fell back with a deep sigh of relief. Toothless looked up at Ruffnut with deeply adoring eyes, shining clearly and brightly.

"Now, we can find your rider," Ruffnut smiled, but her sentiment was cut short by a screech. She looked up just in time to find Torch barrelling towards them at high speed, the Skrill in hot pursuit. The Typhoomerang narrowly avoided smashing into the party, and Scauldy dived just in time to dodge the purple-black creature as it zoomed past. Torch span around, giving it a blast of hot flame, but Dagur's Skrill shook it off as if it were nothing. Another blast of energy sent Torch into a spiralling dive from which he barely recovered.

"Toothless, do something!" Ruffnut cried, though the Night Fury seemed to already have something in mind. He reared up, his dorsal stripe beginning to glow once again as he charged up a powerful bolt of plasma in his gut. The whistle became louder and louder so that Ruffnut was on the verge of covering her ears. Toothless bared his teeth, taking in his target, his intelligent eyes following the Skrill as it made another dive for Torch. Scauldy was looking back nervously, humming to his rider.

In a second, the blast rang out, so bright the rider was almost blinded. It zoomed with practised accuracy at its target, striking the Skrill in the head. The scream was unbearable yet triumphant as the dragon's wings collapsed and it spiralled into the forest. The Skrill was defeated, gone, disappearing between the pines. Toothless gave a roar of victory, then nudged Ruffnut, who was still staring at the place in the sky where the creature had been struck. A chuckle bubbled up from inside her, but somehow, she still felt upset. Had they killed the dragon? Would it come back?

Toothless was suddenly silent, his ears standing on end, tense and alert. He was looking over the forest as if he could hear something. The Skrill coming back, perhaps? No, it was too close to the village. She strained her ears, closing her eyes to better hear what the dragon beside her could. Something so faint, the twin almost couldn't believe it was real. A voice, weak and cracking, calling out for someone. Toothless leapt off Scauldy's back without a second thought, ignoring Ruffnut's calls after him. He crashed into the forest below, smashing through the foliage and out of sight. Scauldy halted above him, Torch just meters behind.

"Where did he go?" She heard her brother call across the gap. She glanced over at him, a look of pure fear plastered over her face.

"I don't know! He heard something, and then just jumped!" She turned back, at a loss as to what to do.

Suddenly, a shape tore back through the trees. With a roar of triumph, Toothless folded his wings and span to the top of his climb, letting himself fall back a few meters, wings open, before regaining himself and circling around them. And there, perched on his back, was the chief of their tribe. Hiccup was back.

_Fells like a good place to stop, even if it is a little short.

Whoop! Skrill defeated and Hiccup and Toothless back! But there's a problem. Can you guess what it is?_

I love writing...

10. Chapter 10

What's the problem? Find out here!

About the author: I'm actually quite bad at spelling and my handwriting is awful. So you see, with the help of a good spell checker, anyone can learn to be a good writer. All you need is patience and a good teacher!

_Hiccupisnotuseless: Thank you, thank you, thank you! You're so kind. And yeah, I know Torch is supposed to be pretty damn good, but the Skrill is also good. Had Tuffnut been riding a dragon like Meatlug, he would most probably have been hit. However, because the Typhoomerang is so fast and so strong, the Skrill never hit him. Meatlug had Fishleg's help in defeating that dragon, though.

—

Immediately, Tuffnut could see that something was wrong. The way his chief was hunched over, clutching at something in his shoulder, unnerved the twin, who cast a glance at his sister, hoping she could see the same thing. The look on her face told him everything he needed to know. The chief stretched himself forward across his dragon's shoulders, enveloping him in a tight hug, murmuring quiet words of joy and comfort. Then, as he sat up, he caught sight of the others, his face lighting up as he gave them a hearty wave.

"Ruffnut! Tuffnut!" He cried with joy, "Don't tell me you did all this on your own?"

"Sure did," Tuffnut smirked, folding his arms contentedly. The twins' cloudy anxiety was instantly dispersed.

"Hiccup, it's so good to see you! Please tell me you have a plan." Hiccup rolled his eyes, never surprised by Ruffnut's pointedness.

"Actually, I don't really. I thought you guys might."

"Ugh!" The sister's face contorted into her familiar scowl. She wrinkled her nose in disgust. "The whole point of breaking you out was so that we'd have a plan!"

"Well, now we're stuck in the air with no plan," Tuffnut shrugged unhelpfully. Hiccup gazed with amusement at the two twins, one with her arms folded and her nose up in the air, the other unattractively digging out his ear with a little finger and wiping it on his shirt. Some things never changed.

"I have a plan" Tuffnut piped up loudly. His sister shot him a look, but he made a defensive noise, holding up a finger to her. "Why don't we go back to Berk and show those Berserkers who's boss?"

"You mean, attack them?" Hiccup queried, an eyebrow raised. He sighed

as the young man nodded eagerly. "Tuffnut, all of our dragons are tired and hungry. We're all weak and at least one of us is injured. I don't think it's a good idea."

"Okay," Ruffnut shrugged nonchalantly, "So how about we go back to Berk and attack?"

"Are you even listening to what I'm saying?" Hiccup could feel a little spark or irritation flaring inside him.

"Yes. Maybe..." She thought for a moment. "I think I worded that wrong."

"Oh, really?" Sarcasm crept into the chief's voice as he painfully folded his arms.

"I meant, if we're all so tired, won't we need back-up? Like, I dunno, the other riders? Your mum? Other dragons?"

A light sparked on in Hiccup's eyes. "You're actually making sense for once, Ruffnut! That's not a bad idea at all. You released at least two dragons when you attacked. Why don't we go and pick them up? They'll need our help by now anyway."

Following after their leader, the three dragons made their way back towards the village from which they had just escaped. Surely enough, the Berserkers were trying to wrestle Meatlug and Hookfang back into their cages, along with a couple of Berkians, one of which was...

"Mum..." Hiccup's breath hitched in his throat. "How dare they touch her. She's better than all of them." Anger boiled inside him, raw and stinging. "Tuffnut, Ruffnut, go give those soldiers something to chew on."

"No problem!" The twins chimed, their dragons swooping one after the other down on the hoard of men below. Torch opened his mouth widely, spewing as much flame as he had left over the amassed men. Scauldy then followed on, putting out the flames with his scalding water and blasting the soldiers away. Of those directly in the firing line, there was nothing left, but the ones near to them, who were catching dragons or people, screamed and fled in shock. Meatlug and Hookfang took to the air immediately, heading up towards Toothless, who was calling to them.

Ruffnut turned Scauldy back to pick up those who were now freed. However, as they hovered close to the Berkians, Berserkers flooded forwards with burning crossbows ready. Ruffnut looked about in alarm, unsure as to what to do. Tuffnut tried swooping down and torching them all, but his dragon was all out of flames and he didn't have any eels on him to replenish it. He shrugged to his sister, turning back towards his leader. The young woman locked eyes with Valka, Hiccup's mother, holding the gaze for a second before the long-braided woman gave a fearful shout.

"Go! Get out of here! Save yourselves!"

"We're coming back for you!" She called back lamely as the first arrows found their target and Scauldy gave a cry. He turned and headed for the safety of the group now flying back over the forest,

his rider perched on his shoulders, her head hanging.

"Did you get them?" Hiccup asked almost immediately, even before he turned around to look.

Shamefaced, Ruffnut shook her head, not meeting his gaze. "Valka told me to run. I said we'd come back for them, but... I'm sorry, Hiccup..."

"Don't worry," He smiled, his voice soft. "We will go back for them, but we all need to rest before we do anything. Your dragon needs those bolts removing, Torch is covered in them too, and Toothless will waste away if he doesn't eat soon." His voice softened even further. "I'm really proud of both of you, of all of you. Don't put yourselves down about it."

The rest of the journey continued in silence until Hiccup pointed out a suitable clearing with a clean, clear stream running a short distance away. The dragons and riders landed heavily, thoroughly worn out. Meatlug and Hookfang curled up together, instantly going to sleep, while Torch and Scauldy stood together pulling crossbow bolts from each other's skin. The three humans slid down and fell to the ground tiredly, Tuffnut not wasting a moment before he stretched out on his back and fell asleep.

Ruffnut looked over at the way Hiccup was so tenderly holding his shoulder. "You're hurt, aren't you?" She asked, shuffling closer.

Hiccup nodded. "Yeah, arrow to the shoulder. I managed to pull it out, but now the excitement is over, it's starting to hurt."

"How did it get through your armour?"

"It was a great shot, really. Straight through the gap here, look." He stuck his finger in between his hardened leather breastplate and painted metal shoulder pad to illustrate the point.

Ruffnut was about to mention something when, all of a sudden, an agitation behind her caught both of their attentions. Even Tuffnut was woken as Scauldy reared up, thrusting his wings and roaring deeply. The other dragons skittered away to make room as he leapt off the ground and soared away towards the sea. Ruffnut and Hiccup were instantly on their feet, running to a vantage point to see where he was going. Being a flat clearing, on the downward edge was a steep bank, almost unnatural in its angle and smoothness. Perhaps it was made many moons ago by a huge dragon digging for who-knows-what?

This, however, gave them a good view over the trees to the ocean, where they watched the Scauldron plunge into the deep water. He put on a spectacular show for them, dipping and diving, splashing with his wide tail and jumping from the water.

"What is he doing?" Ruffnut scowled curiously, looking to Hiccup for advice. Tuffnut appeared on his other side, eyebrow raised.

"I... I don't know. Maybe he's just enjoying the water. It's probably quite nice on all those wounds." Hiccup shrugged as he continued to watch the dragon play in the water.

After around half an hour (for all of which, the Berkians were transfixed), The dragon lifted up one last time from the water and flew back inshore towards them. He glided overhead, dripping water everywhere, and hovered above the gathering of dragons. They were all looking up at him with expectant eyes, while the riders were simply confused. All of a sudden, Scauldy's neck bulged and he regurgitated a huge pile of fish for his fellow dragons, who wasted no time in tucking in heartily. At first, it looked like the Scauldron was joining in too, but then, he pulled his head back and dumped the fish he'd salvaged in front of the riders and plodded sedately off to find himself a nice patch of Blue Oliander flowers, his favourite food, to fill his own tummy.

Ruffnut gave a little laugh, turning to Hiccup and her brother, but her face fell when she saw just how pale her chief had become. Tuffnut had obviously noticed it too, his eyes clouded with uncharacteristic worry.

"Hey, Hiccup, you feeling alright? You don't look so good." He asked slowly. The young man raised a hand to his forehead, visibly shaking and feeling queasy.

"Actually, I... I..." The chief didn't get a chance to finish his sentence before his vision went black. He was unconscious before he even hit the ground.

OOOH DAYAM. Peeps are really gonna hate me for that! Oh well, I'm the writer, I get to decide the story! Stay tuned to find out what happens next.

11. Chapter 11

Chapter 11 already! Wow, I'm moving on really fast. Only one problem: College starts again on Monday, so there won't be much in the way of updates after then. Sorry!

Sealiman Dawntracker: Yes! As much as possible!

Guest: Thanks a lot! I'm putting as much effort as possible into this. I hope he will be cute, but I'll have to get around to finishing him first!

Slowly, the blackness cleared from Hiccup's mind, draining away like a thick, oily sludge. He felt the swelling of his lungs in his chest, the throbbing of his heart as his consciousness slowly returned. Trying to get himself moving again, he clenched his left fist slowly, then his right. It took effort, but every time he repeated the action, he felt stronger, until finally, he had the strength to force his eyes to flutter open.

He was lying on his back, staring up at what seemed to be a surprisingly thick canopy of leaves, with branches criss-crossing it like the struts of a house. He gulped thirstily, turning his head to search for water and finding that the canopy stretched right down to the ground at the back. The pine boughs were all entwined together and resting against the wooden frame. It was a shelter, he realised with a jolt. Looking the other way confirmed it; he stared out of the opening into the warm glow of the approaching dawn.

There, sprawled out near to the shelter, Ruffnut lay in a heap as though she had just fallen asleep where she fell, an empty water skin from Toothless's saddle bags clutched in her hand. Her brother was trying to arrange her in a position that wasn't quite so dynamic, without any trouble, thanks to her being such a heavy sleeper. As he finally rolled her on to her back and lay her arms by her sides, he peered into the shelter and raised a hand in greeting to his chief.

"How are you feeling?" He called out, overly loudly. His voice rang painfully in Hiccup's head.

"Fine, I think..." He croaked feebly, swallowing dryly again. "Though... I wouldn't mind a drink of water."

"One water, coming right up!" The brother chimed, skipping merrily away towards the sound of pure, trickling liquid, leaving the water skin still clutched in his sister's hand. He was halfway across the clearing before he realised and doubled back to retrieve it. Hiccup's eyes fell on Ruffnut, who was unattractively smacking her lips in her sleep. She must have done everything here for him, from the bed of boughs he was sleeping on to the shelter he was sleeping under. He suddenly realised that his shoulder, tough painful to move, was almost comfortable again. She'd removed his breastplate and shoulder pads, laying them out neatly beside him. It would explain why his jerkin shoulder was slightly damp; she'd obviously cleaned that up, too.

The dragons must have helped too, and her brother to some extent, but he was willing to bet that she had done the bulk of the work. Despite her short attention span, shelter building was one of her few talents, and this one was no exception. He smiled. There had to be some sort of reward he could give both of the twins for their support and bravery. However, maybe getting back their village would be enough.

"She said you need to rest." Tuffnut muttered, flopping down beside him and handing him the water skin. Hiccup drank thirstily, almost emptying the skin before he placed it back on the ground again.

"I don't think I'd mind," He replied casually. Tuffnut smirked. However, there was a look in his eyes that his chief knew all too well. "What's wrong, Tuff?"

"Will we get the village back?" The uncertainty sounded wrong in his voice, looked wrong on his face. Hiccup cringed slightly, turning his face away.

"Well... 'Course we will. Look at all the help we've got! Dagur doesn't stand a chance, trust me. And besides, I already have a plan. I'll tell you once we've both had some sleep, okay?"

"Ugh, fine..." Tuffnut lay back and rolled onto his side, his back to his chief, playing with the dust with one finger. However, it didn't take long for them both to be asleep.

Toothless snatched at the air beneath him, twisting his tail to every gust, taking deep, refreshing breaths of the clean air. His wings pounded powerfully as they flew across the tree canopy at speed. His

rider stood in his stirrups, perched confidently atop his dragon, a determined look crossing his face. This was it. Only one chance. It was now or never. If they didn't reclaim Berk now, well, they might just as well forget it. Hiccup glanced back nervously. Just three Vikings and five dragons against the whole of the Berserker fleet. The odds were stacked against them.

"We all know the plan, guys. Now's our chance to make it happen. Still with me?" He called back. If they wanted to abandon everything, he wasn't going to stop them. He was asking them to go to death for him. However, he heard a sharp laugh in reply.

"Yup!" Tuffnut blurted out, adjusting his helmet with a sly smirk.

"Always!" His sister added jubilantly.

"Right then. Into Hel we go..." Hiccup gulped, bracing himself as the last of the trees gave way to reveal the scar of the village, blackened and burned, huddled in a circle of destruction. Below, he could see the soldiers swarming about, moving things, wading through the mud and the ash and the sludge below. He could see the Skrill on its raised platform, fast asleep as people moved around it. Dagur was nowhere to be seen.

"You know the plan, guys! Let's move!" On his command, Toothless dropped, followed closely by Torch. The familiar Night Fury screech built beneath the dragon's wings until, with a triumphant sound, Toothless blasted a hole in the centre of the village. The men around threw themselves to the ground, covering their heads as the creature passed over. Torch gave a shrill cry, bringing back his head and bathing the ground in hot, molten fire. A great stream stretched out from behind him.

Meatlug and Hookfang weren't far behind them, and as Toothless doubled back, Hiccup shouted out his orders to them. "Keep everyone below occupied and Torch will set your riders free. Trust me!" Toothless added a powerful roar to underline his point, then turned in the direction of his own battle. The Skrill, waking up and shaking out its wings, gave a mighty, challenging roar.

Scauldy hung back, staring down at the battle below with a sense of urgency. He wanted to be down there, helping, but his rider refused to let him budge. Hidden away in the nook of the mountain, She had to stay put and wait for Hiccup. It was the one thing she had to remember. After that, everyone would see how amazing her dragon was. She'd show them all soon enough.

Torch reached out with his powerful hind claws, smashing his way through the first set of houses. "Remember, Torch," his rider called out, "we're looking for Hiccup's mum. As soon as we find her, you have to let me down, okay?" His dragon nodded, banking sharply to come in for another pass. Already, people were clambering out of the wreckage, but they weren't riders or dragons from the flight club; just normal townsfolk desperate to be free. They took up arms against the Berserkers as soon as they set eyes on them, fighting with whatever they had: sticks, stones, pieces of splintered wood. Torch stretched out again, ready for the second pass.

Hiccup watched as the Skrill looked up at him, hatred in its eyes.

Hatred put there by Dagur. This dragon wasn't a bad dragon, it wasn't evil, but it had befriended the wrong human. It believed that this was right, that this was good. His stomach churned uncomfortably. Toothless fired a shot along one side of the deck, swooping past and turning in a wide circle to do the same on the other side. Without a second thought, it leapt into the air and began the chase.

"Down there!" Tuffnut yelled triumphantly. He pointed as he spotted Valka clambering out of the remains of one house, looking dazed and confused, disorientated, even. Calling out her name, he had Torch dive down and drop him beside her, before he flew away again to continue his attack.

"Valka! I'm so glad you're okay!" He cried in elation.

"Tuffnut? I don't understand, what's going on?" She snatched hold of his arm to steady herself. Around them, soldiers were closing in. Tuffnut backed away, pulling Hiccup's mother along with him. Sneering faces pressed in on all sides, weapons glinting in the firelight. Determined looks passed over both of their faces, Valka dropping Tuffnut's arm and striding forward confidently.

"Where's my armour?" She growled. The soldiers laughed heartily as though it were some kind of joke, but the cruel look crossing the woman's face told otherwise. "Where have you put it? I demand to know!" She bared her teeth.

"Why should we tell you?" One man snorted.

"Because if you don't, the dragons hovering above you will attack and probably kill you all." The chief's mother turned her gaze skyward, to where Meatlug and Hookfang were holding themselves steady against the wind. The men were frozen with fear, not a word passing their lips. A few weapons dropped to the ground. "Very well, I'm sure we'll find them somewhere. Tuffnut, to Cloudjumper!"

Blasts echoed as the two dragons made a hole in the ranks for their humans. Valka grabbed the young man's hand and dragged him behind her. Both bolted towards a large building that was still yet to be destroyed by the huge Typhoomerang swooping above. Tuffnut gave a shout, directing his dragon to the place they were heading, watching in awe as he swept out of the sky and smashed through the building. Inside, they watched as the magnificent head of a Stormcutter rose out of the wreckage and gave a screeching roar.

Sorry it's late, had to go upcountry yesterday. It was fun, but it did make me late for the upload. It's here, though! Only one day late. I shall try to keep on top of these uploads from now on! Just a quick update, updates will slow down after Monday because I go back to college then, so don't get upset at me, okay?

12. Chapter 12

Chapter 12 is here! Well, it might not be as I write this, but to you reading it, it is! Whoop!

_Draw my Dragons!: If you're a regular reader and you've read all of my stories, and if you're on Deviantart or a similar site, I want to see what you think my dragons look like. Draw Blueflame, the Burrow

Barrow, whatever you like, but please, if you upload it, please link it to the story in which it appears and credit the design to me. I might have a go on my own profile, seeing as I had to draw them to design them in the first place._

Hiccupisnotuseless: Thank you as always! Sorry, I completely forgot it was there, with college and everything going on. Hmm, Grump wasn't going to be mentioned in this story. Perhaps I'll make a short little one-shot for him because I love him too

_ 1248: Thank you very much, you're too kind_

Guest: It's not a problem, really! I always feel bad for uploading late, as you may have noticed. Thanks!

Guest: Thanks a lot, but nope, it's not going to be a Ruffcup fic. If you've read some of my earlier stories, you'll see that I'm not a huge fan of non-canon relationships because I find love stories boring on the whole and I just feel the two wouldn't go together. Sorry!

_Guest: Thank you for your kind words, but I don't feel I have anything to gain from putting a non-canon pairing in here. I don't really need to repeat my last reply, but I don't like the relationship and find any pairing here slightly unnecessary. Apologies. _

Cloudjumper flailed wildly, but flopped heavily onto his side, the chains binding him biting into his skin. He gave an enraged howl, hissing as he struggled, the fierce claws on his feet scything through the air as he thrashed. His wide brow was contorted with rage and fear, the decorative ruff around his neck rustling and quivering with emotion. His long, finned tail smashed against the wall as he tried everything he could to free his four lethally-clawed wings from the chains. Valka gave a cry as she saw what had become of her beautiful dragon.

"Monsters! Who could do this to such a gentle beast!" She wailed, her mouth agape in shock as she rushed forward. Cloudjumper calmed as soon as he caught sight of his rider, crooning softly, a sad look in his eyes. The woman tugged at her dragon's chains, but to no avail; the Stormcutter had pulled them all tight with his anger. Tuffnut rushed forward, ceasing the lock in his long fingers and giving a shout of mirth.

"Oh, come on! They're making this too easy!" He laughed to his chief's mother. As she gazed on curiously, along with her dragon, Tuffnut reached around to his hip and drew out his long, thin dagger. Thrusting it into the lock, he twisted and turned until, with a click, the chains fell away.

"No problem," He announced proudly. Valka clapped him on the back, then began to pull the bindings away from her precious dragon.

"Quite impressive, Tuffnut. And where did you learn to do that?"

"Taught myself. Ruffnut and I used to steal food from the food stores when we were kids." He spoke without a hint of emotion, as though it

was nothing of importance, and chose to ignore her disapproving look. Suddenly, the last of the chains fell away, and, ruffling his plumage, Cloudjumper rose to his feet and beat all four of his wings free, stretching out, ready to fly. Valka leapt up onto his back and they were off, thundering down the street and up into the air. Tuffnut chuckled lightly until he realised he was totally surrounded by soldiers.

"Torch!" He called, beginning to panic. All he had was his small knife against their swords, axes and maces. He could feel his palms become clammy.

"Your dragon can't save you now, Berkian scum," One man announced from the centre of the pack.

"Uh, I disagree with that statement!" He replied in his usual manner, though there was a tremor in his voice that wasn't usually there. A few Berserkers sniggered.

With a roar, he was suddenly swept up into the sky, clasped carefully in a Typhoomerang's sharp talons. Torch gave another triumphant screech as he turned to come about, bathing the men below in fire while Tuffnut smugly stuck out his tongue.

"Just a little longer. Wait for just a bit, Scauldy..." Ruffnut was trying her hardest to keep her dragon under control as the Scauldron fussed over being left out of the action. He snorted indignantly, shaking his head. "Come on, Hiccup, where are you?"

In fact, Hiccup was very close to her indeed. Toothless was powering straight up into the sky, the Skrill following in hot pursuit, snapping at his ankles with the occasional blast of lightning energy. The Night Fury suddenly changed course, diving steeply down, and again, Dagur's dragon followed on.

"Now, Toothless! Towards Ruffnut and Scauldy!" Hiccup gave the command that his dragon had been waiting for. Expertly, the dragon flared his wings and shot like a cross-bow bolt towards where their friends were lurking. He navigated the sharp rocks behind which Scauldy hid and barrelled past him at high speed.

"Hit it with everything you've got!" He called out.

"My pleasure!" Ruffnut replied, turning Scauldy towards the oncoming dragon. Before it even had time to slow down, the Tidal dragon began a deluge of water that surged over its back, soaking every last bit of it. He didn't stop until he was sure the creature was powerless. With a pitiful cry, the Skrill retreated, its electric power fizzing and sparking off its purple-black scales.

"We did it!" The rider cheered, throwing her arms up in the air in celebration. Hiccup laughed as he and Toothless came back around to congratulate them. "Great plan, Hiccup. You're pretty smart."

"Well, it was a great shot, and perfectly timed. Well done yourself." He replied modestly, smirking.

"Can Scauldy and I go and help out on the ground now?" She sounded almost disturbingly eager. Hiccup frowned, then allowed himself to smirk at her childish enthusiasm.

"Be my guest. Round up all the dragon riders if you can and get all the Berserkers back on their ships."

"Okay!" He hardly heard the reply as she and her dragon dived straight back into the action. Ruffnut made a bee-line for her brother, looking down as dragons were re-untied with their riders and began to fight back at their tormentors. Astrid and Stormfly were soon up in the air, firing an endless barrage of spines from the Nadder's whiplash tail. Valka and Cloudjumper were circling, tearing a hole through the soldier's defences with her dragon's powerful vortex flame attack.

"Tuffnut!" The dragons came close and circled each other, allowing their riders to talk. "Hiccup says we have to get all the Berserkers together and get them on to the ship. I have an idea, but you have to trust me, okay?"

Valka looked across to where the two riders were discussing something, her brow creasing as she wondered what it could be. Something was happening, and all of the riders around her could see it, could feel it. Cloudjumper snorted, becoming edgy as they came away from each other and began a wide circling motion around the entire of the Berserker army. _What are they doing? _She thought to herself, sinking lower against her dragon's shoulders. Both dragons roared together, creating a thundering cacophony that attracted the attention of every living creature. Then, with a certain grace, both dropped their heads as one and began to pour every ounce of their breath attacks down into the square.

_They're driving the soldiers together! _Valka thought amazedly. Furthermore, as Torch burned the already black ground, Scauldy put out the fires, minimising the damage caused. Soon, all of the Berserkers were contained within a ring of fire and water. Valka ceased the chance and raced forward on her dragon, forcing the men away with a vortex of super-heated flame. They dropped their weapons and scattered with fear, like fish away from a seal, down and down towards the boats. Every man ran screaming for his life until there was only one figure left standing, resplendent, before them.

Dagur refused to budge. He didn't move as Toothless swept down onto the ground, as his rider leapt off, as Hiccup approached. The dragons gathered around them, all behind their chief, unmoving in their loyalty. The two huge creatures still circled in the sky, along with Cloudjumper and Valka, keeping a close eye on the man before them.

He had a single slingshot in his hands, with a single stone clasped between his fingers, the string pulled back, ready to fire at the chief, though his arms were trembling. Hiccup raised his hands towards the other chief, carefully watching the unstable character.

"It's over, Dagur, You've lost. Just give up and put the slingshot down." He spoke calmly, so as not to provoke his enemy. The man took deep, ragged breaths, aiming at anything that moved or could move with sharp, desperate movements.

"It's never over!" His eyes were wild, his voice cracking and high. "I never give up, Hiccup, my brother. I never give in. I'm not weak,

like my father. _I'm not weak!_"

"You don't have to be weak to know when you're defeated. In fact, it's stronger to admit you've lost."

"_I never lose!_" The string made a loud snapping noise as he released his shot, aiming not at Hiccup, but at his mother, who was high above on her dragon. Valka gave a scream as she was hit, recoiling, sliding off her dragon's back with a hand touched lightly to her forehead.

"_NO!" _Hiccup's screech was enough to break any man's heart. As Dagur made good his escape, Cloudjumper folded his wings, diving to snatch up his rider's limp form as she fell. He landed like a hawk, wings flared out by his sides, his rider protectively clasped in his claws, giving a heart-wrenching cry of misery. The chief sprinted over, placing his hand on the dragon's muzzle before he dropped to his knees beside his mother.

"No, no, _no! _Come on, not you too!" He whined. He pulled her into a more comfortable position, her arms resting on her belly, turning her pale face towards him. He couldn't even see where the rock had hit her, but it didn't even matter to him anymore. All he wanted to see was his mother smile again.

"Mum...?" He cupped her cheek in his hand, tears pricking his eyes. He couldn't lose her too. Everything around him seemed muffled, like it barely existed, it didn't even matter anymore. "Please, wake up... You have to wake up!" All of his calm composure dissolved as he felt arms wrapping around his shoulders. Astrid held him tightly, not speaking, knowing nothing she could say could make this any easier.

Suddenly, he roughly pulled away, placing his ear against her breast, listening for her heartbeat, but he could hear nothing. He didn't even have the strength to pull himself back up. First, his father, now, he'd lost his mother too.

"I'm sorry, mum... I'm so sorry..." He moaned. Or did_ she_? Astrid couldn't tell anymore. Everything was just a haze of tears and pain. She blinked them away, roughly rubbing her eyes and looking down again to see... her brow creasing? Her hands shot out, grabbing her chief and pulling him up against her as Valka reached up to touch her brow lightly.

"Och, ow!" She groaned, looking up hazily. "That hurts! Must say, though, it was a bloody good shot!" A grin broke out onto her face as her son threw his arms around her, sobbing like a child.

"Mum! You're alive!" He wailed, "I thought I'd lost you!"

"You'll never lose me, my son," She whispered as she held him close. "Not ever..."

End. Actually, there's a chapter to go. Did I rush that too much? Also, don't forget to let me know if you've tried drawing my dragons. I'll put a link to my deviantart if any go up on my profile. Tah-rah!"

13. Chapter 13

So, the last chapter of Death of Berk! Good so far? I hope so! Also, I'm sorry if anyone was offended by my not putting in a Ruffcup element to this or my replies in the last chapter. I was trying my hardest to be as polite as possible!

Guest: Well, I hope I managed to upload it in time for you! I think I may have missed the deadline slightly. Sorry!

"Uuugh!" Ruffnut dropped her hammer onto the ground and flopped onto her back in disgust. "This is so _boring_"

"Yeah, you're telling me!" Her brother replied, scowling grumpily. From behind the twins came a bubbling growl, two dragon heads rising up and pushing their way between the twins. Ruffnut and Tuffnut exchanged glances before laughing and grabbing their Zippleback's heads in tight, affectionate hugs. The dragon's protruding teeth and snake-like appearance didn't put the two twins off; in fact, it almost made them love their dragon even more.

"We missed you guys back there," The sister admitted, casting a glance towards her sibling.

"Yeah," Tuff agreed, "It wouldn't have gone on so long if you'd been there. We could have taken Dagur all on our own!"

"Back to work, you two! This village isn't going to rebuild itself!" Astrid strode proudly up to them, giving them both a deft slap on the arm to get them back up. Their dragon looked on in amusement as they once again picked up their hammers and continued to beat the planks of their house back into shape.

"... They punched me."

"Huh?" Tuffnut turned to his sister in confusion. She was looking dead ahead, her hammer hanging loosely by her side.

"You asked, a long time ago. 'What did they do to me'? Well, there's your answer." She sniffed, looking down at her unfinished work. The dragons were watching on intently. "Still kinda hurts..."

"Well, don't worry, sis, 'cos next time I see them, they're totally going down..."

Around the village, the same thing was happening to every house. Every single Viking, man, woman or child, was hard at work getting the village back to how it was. Starting with the houses, Hiccup's plan was to work outwards over the still-scorched ground, salvaging everything that could be salvaged and making up the rest with fresh wood from the forest and fresh metal from the forge. In fact, Gobber and Grump had never been so busy, so much so that Hiccup himself was actually having to help him out. The skills he had learned from the Blacksmith so long ago finally came into play for real, though the chief was certainly a little rusty.

His mother stood by, watching curiously from the sidelines, though she should have been overseeing a group of builders. Cloudjumper had been left to encourage them by himself, but he didn't seem to mind at all. His thoughtful rider was intrigued to discover what her son had

been doing all the years she had been away.

There was a certain vanity to the silver-blue day, the little clouds skudding by on the brisk, chilly wind. There was a threat of snow in the air, a bite of cold winter approaching, but all the Vikings felt confident that their village would be perfectly ready to cope with it when the harsh winter wrapped it's claws around them. The optimism had lifted the spirits of all of the townsfolk, and Hiccup could feel the relief, palpable in the air, as he dropped his tools for a well-earned break.

"So, what do you think?" He called across to his mother, who smiled at him as he approached. "Is it beginning to look like Berk again?"

"Och, it certainly is!" She laughed, grabbing her son by the shoulder and giving him a mighty pat on the back. Her eyes were filled with an infectious, child-like joy that Hiccup found he could not resist; soon, they were both laughing together, at nothing and at everything, as the blue sky watched on from above.

And that's it. The End! Don't forget to R+R, I really appreciate it!

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14. The Runaway 2: Sneak Peak

Just 3 days to go until The Runaway 2 hits your computer screens! Is everyone else as excited as I am? Just to get you ready, here's a sneaky peak of the first chapter! (This doesn't mean you can skip the bit at the beginning on Saturday. I've cut it down so that it'll fit onto one page.)

"Well, Meatlug, now you can see why I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Just look at this!" Fishlegs threw his arms out wide, trying to somehow capture and frame the perfect image of the night to keep in his mind forever. If he could take any snapshot of the view, it would be this one. Sighing contentedly, he leant back against his dragon's warm belly, breathing the scorched scent of dragon scales deeply into his lungs. Nothing could be more perfect than this.

"A beautiful night on watch with my beautiful dragon. Nothing could be better!" He beamed, patting his Gronkle on the nose. Meatlug was heavy and strong, her thick, rocky skin encasing a gentle and kind interior. Her stone-crushing jaws were nothing to her but a way to eat and to nibble and to lick in the most affectionate ways. There really was nothing scary about Meatlug at all. As soft as a sponge, she and her rider fitted together like the pieces of a jigsaw.

Fishlegs was a tall, stocky boy, broad-shouldered and strong, and yet, he too was as gracious and courteous as his dragon. His knowledge of the creatures was rivalled by no man, for he kept the Book of Dragons, the Vikings' compendium of the entirety of their information on everything scaled and reptilian. This book was the

most precious weapon in all the Berkian's arsenal, for with it, they could tell the strengths and weaknesses of every single dragon in the world. The precious volume was safely stored away at Fishleg's house, leaving him free to relax on his night patrol.

Suddenly, an unusual wave disturbed the softly rippling waters. Fishleg's scowled, becoming tense. His dragon sat up warily, giving an uneasy growl as she searched the skies. The young man barely dared to breath, scouring the landscape for any sight, sound or feel of an intruder. Suddenly, Meatlug relaxed, and Fishlegs was almost on the verge of convincing himself that he was imagining things when suddenly, he heard something.

His heart skipped a beat. A sort of rustling, snuffling coming from behind him. Could it just be a Terrible Terror, the Jack Russell Terrier of the dragon world, come to bother him in the night? Or could it possibly be something more sinister? The plump Viking stood and turned just a second before the first explosion rang out.

He uttered a scream quite unbecoming of a man his size, staring at the rising silver cloud in horror. It bloomed like a mushroom, up into the cold night air. He could see fire, smell burning, hear screams as the occupants were awoken abruptly from their sleep. Then, came another, off to the north. This time, he watched as the shaped charge, purplish in hue, whizzed through the air with an airy screech and tore into the ground, tossing mud and shrapnel high into the air. His blood froze colder than the harshest winter.

"Toothless?"

_The Runaway 2: Under Siege. First chapter out Saturday. _

15. The Runaway 2: Sneak Peek 2

Okay, so, I know it's late, but here's the second taster of the new Runaway story. The reason it's late is that I forgot, but I have a reason to forget. My Mum damaged her back the other day and that, along with my uni application was taking up all of my mind. So there. Case closed. The first chapter will be uploaded in a few hours time, so hold on to your hats!

"Hiccup!" Astrid was out of her dragon's saddle before the Nadder had even landed. "Oh, Gods, please tell me you're alright!" Before her, a path of destruction lay. Splinters of shrapnel littered the ground where the man and dragon had hit the shack, the house left without most of its roof. The dust around them was just settling away, revealing a huddled, black shape curled into a protective ball in the centre of the rubble. Toothless looked as though he was encased in a nest of shattered, splintered wooden panels, just lifting his head and shaking the shock from his head. Astrid knelt beside him, reaching out to touch his nose, her face a picture of worry.

"Please tell me you got him, Toothless..." She whispered. As if in response, he gave a slight, jerky nod and unfurled his wings. His rider rolled out of his grasp, struggling to get to his feet, looking distant and almost... afraid. Astrid reached out to touch his cheek.

"Hiccup? Are... are you okay?"

"It's her, Astrid... it's her..." He mumbled, looking about with a certain feverishness. His body trembled with shock, his skin pale and clammy to the touch.

"Who? Who is it?"

He looked her in the eyes. "It's Kat. She's back."

Oooh! Keep your eyes peeled, The Runaway 2: Under Siege hits your computer screens today!

End
file.